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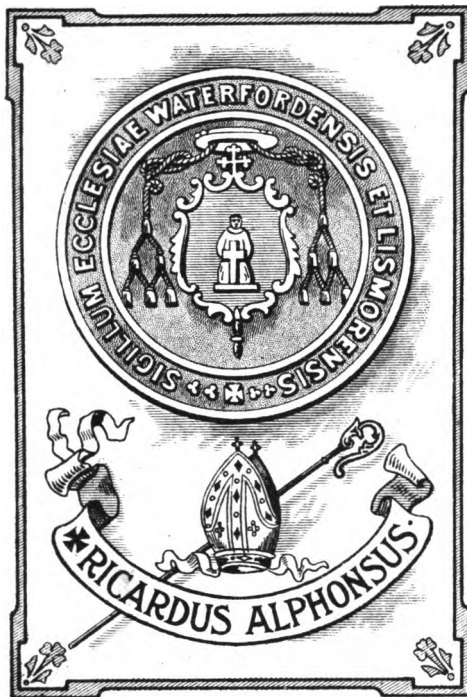
The CATHOLICS
OF IRELAND



UNDER THE
PENAL LAWS
IN THE
18TH CENTURY



CARDINAL MORAN



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THE CATHOLICS OF IRELAND
UNDER THE
PENAL LAWS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE
CATHOLICS OF IRELAND

UNDER THE PENAL LAWS IN THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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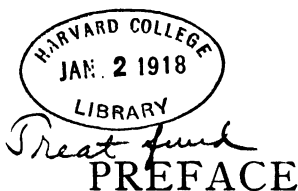


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AN endeavour is made in the following pages to sketch very briefly the condition of the Catholics of Ireland under the Penal Laws in the eighteenth century. The first Chapter is the substance of an article that appeared in the *Dublin Review* as far back as January, 1882. The subject was continued in a series of papers in the *Australasian Catholic Record*, published in Sydney, commencing in 1895. At the request of the Catholic Truth Society, those papers now appear in their present form.

Perhaps no one will be more convinced than the writer, that the sketch here presented is far from being perfect or complete. The subject matter, however, cannot fail to commend the little volume to those readers who rejoice in the triumphs of religion. Never has a whole nation suffered more for the Faith than Ireland; and nowhere has fidelity to God and loyalty to the Holy See, amid unparalleled sufferings and national humiliations, achieved more glorious victories or been crowned with happier results. Those victories of the Faith and those grand religious results are a priceless heritage, of which the Irish race at home and abroad is justly proud at the present day. Every tradition of those times of suffering, and every record of the heroism of Ireland's martyrs, cannot but be acceptable to those who have at heart the success of the great work of religion in which the Catholic Truth Society is engaged.

SYDNEY, *June*, 1899.

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ERRATA

- Page 8, line 6, *for* “country,” *read* “county.”
- „ 15, note, *for* “Catholics,” *read* “Catholici.”
- „ 36, line 31, *for* “shermen,” *read* “fishermen.”
- „ 45 „ 1, *for* “to,” *read* “of.”
- „ 52 „ 28, *for* “nortorious,” *read* “notorious.”
- „ 69 „ 31, insert inverted commas after “Foster.”
- „ 70 „ 30, *for* “Popish,” *read* “Papist.”
- „ 98 „ 6, *for* “Primatical,” *read* “Primalial.”
- „ 149 „ 10, *for* “Collegio,” *read* “Collegia.”
- „ 172 „ 23, *for* “povery,” *read* “poverty.”

THE CATHOLICS OF IRELAND

UNDER THE PENAL LAWS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



CHAPTER THE FIRST

Advantages of recalling to mind the sufferings of the Catholic Church in Ireland under the Penal Laws—These Laws were practically in force throughout the whole of the eighteenth century—Words of Edmund Burke—Goldwin Smith—Mac-Knight—John Morley—Lecky—Dean Swift—The Treaty of Limerick—Outcry of Protestant Bishops—Report of the Irish Parliament in October, 1692—Lord Capel appointed Viceroy—First Penal Laws—Bishops and Regulars sent into exile in 1698—Other enactments in 1703—Results—A curious instance—The natives mercilessly trampled on—Words of Swift and Dr. Nicholson—Periodical famines—The tenants oppressed—Social results of the Penal Laws—No Irish Papist supposed to exist in the country—Trade discouraged—Theft compensated by tax on the Catholic neighbours—Anti-Catholic feeling—A brilliant exception—Special laws against the clergy—Other enactments—The nest of boxes seized at Ennis—Petitions of Protestant fishermen—And of Dublin coal-porters—Palatines brought over from Germany—Privileges accorded to them—Scotch families in Ulster—Words of Bishop of Raphoe—A solitary Catholic in Holywood.

WHEN we look upon the Catholic Church in Ireland at the present day, and see her crowned with the richest blessings by a benign Providence, it is not easy to realize to ourselves how lowly was her state throughout the whole of the last century. And yet it would not be well if that period of her sorrows and humiliation were too soon to be forgotten. It is not only that its gloom and

shadows bring out in brighter relief the religious peace and sunshine which Ireland now enjoys, and that it serves to teach the children of St. Patrick, scattered as they are throughout the world, to love and to cherish the inheritance of Divine truth for which their fathers suffered so much: but it moreover imparts lessons of wisdom and consolation, and cheering hope, to those brethren in the Faith who, in so many countries of Europe at the present day, are subjected to similar humiliations and trials. They may learn from the history of Ireland's sufferings that their constancy and perseverance in defence of religion are sure to triumph; and that the persecutions they now endure for justice' sake will be rewarded at no distant day by the crown of victory.

During the whole of the eighteenth century, the Penal Laws may be said to have been in full force throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom. It was not that England had not long before laid aside the delusive hope that Ireland could be driven by the sword to embrace the pretended Reformation; but she continued nevertheless to heap afflictions on the Irish Catholics, and she ceased not to pursue them with relentless hatred, that thus she might at least impress the stigma of reproach upon their faith, and degrade the religion which she had failed to destroy.

The words in which the immortal Burke has described the vicious perfection of the Penal Laws cannot be repeated too often, nor should it be forgotten that he was himself witness of the operation of these laws, and that many of his relatives and dearest friends had experienced their full rigour. "It was a complete system," he says, "well digested and well composed in all its parts. It was a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a feeble people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man." The memory of this code, Mr. Goldwin Smith adds, "will remain a reproach to

human nature, and a terrible monument of the vileness into which nations may be led when their religion has been turned into hatred and they have been taught to believe that the indulgence of the most malignant passions of man is an acceptable offering to God ; for it was a code of degradation and proscription, not only religious and political, but social."

MacKnight, in his *Political Life of Burke*, also declares that "the Penal Laws form a code which every tyrant might study, and find his knowledge of the surest means of producing human wretchedness extended. He would see at once a terrible engine made perfect with all the science of political mechanism, for those who, with devilish malignity, would reverse the end of government, and instead of improving the well-being of the community, deliberately set about the destruction of a race."

Mr. John Morley adds his testimony to the same effect : — "Protestants," he says, "love to dwell upon the horrors of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, of the proscriptions of Philip the Second, and of the Inquisition. Let them turn candidly to the history of Ireland, from 1691 down to 1798, and they will perceive that the diabolical proscription of the Penal Laws, and the frenzied atrocities with which the Protestants suppressed the Catholic rising at the close of the century, are absolutely unsurpassed in history. The Penal Code has often been transcribed. In a country where the toleration of Protestantism is constantly overvaunted it can scarcely be transcribed too often."¹

The testimony of Mr. Lecky, in his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, is not less explicit. "It would be difficult," he writes, "in the whole compass of history to find another instance in which such various and such powerful agencies concurred to degrade the character and to blast the prosperity of a nation."

I will only add the emphatic words of Dean Swift when he declared about 1725 that "this kingdom

¹ Morley's *Burke*, p. 101.

(Ireland) is now absolutely starving by the means of every oppression that can be inflicted on mankind."¹

It would not be within the limits of this volume to set forth in detail the long series of enactments which were sanctioned in successive Parliaments to oppress and to degrade the Irish Catholics. It will suffice for us to sketch briefly some of the distinctive features of the Penal Code, and to glean from official records and other authentic sources a few facts which may serve to illustrate at the same time the bitterness of the persecution and the true Christian heroism of the sufferers.

The Treaty of Limerick, by which that last Catholic stronghold was surrendered to the Williamite army, was most honourable to the vanquished nation. King William III. was particularly anxious to conclude the treaty. He required all his troops to sustain the cause of his allies in Flanders, and hence he gave secret instructions to his commander Ginkle to "grant all the demands the Irish could make that would put an end to the war" (Burnet, vol. iv. p. 139). Further, he was aware that the French fleet had sailed for the southern coast of Ireland, and that, should they arrive before the treaty was concluded, the war might be indefinitely prolonged. In fact, two days after the articles were signed, the French fleet arrived in Dingle Bay. The Lords Justices were filled with alarm, and set forth in their letter to the King that it consisted of 18 ships of war, 6 fire-ships, and 20 large transports, having on board 200 officers and 3,000 men, with about 10,000 stand of arms. The Irish commanders, however, remained faithful to the Treaty of Surrender which had just been signed, and the fleet returned to France.

By the Treaty of Limerick, the native population was practically placed on a footing of perfect equality with the English settlers in the island. They were granted reedom of religious worship and the use of arms, and were confirmed in their proprietorial rights and privileges.

¹ Swift's Works (ed. Scott), vol. xviii. p. 366.

They were entitled to sit in Parliament, to vote at elections, to practise law and medicine, and to engage in trade and commerce.

The anti-Catholic faction that ruled in England resolved without delay to tear to shreds this Limerick Treaty. One of the Protestant Bishops, Dr. Dopping, Bishop of Meath, took the lead in this unscrupulous campaign of dishonour and treachery. From the pulpit of Christ Church, in Dublin, in the presence of the Lords Justices who had signed the Treaty, he did not blush to preach that "the peace ought not to be observed," and that no faith should be kept with the Irish. The Protestant Bishop of Cork followed suit. It is recorded in the Journals of the Irish House of Lords that he preached boldly against the Irish, and so pleased was the House of Lords with his performance that they "voted the thanks of the House to be given to him for his sermon, with their desire that he should print it" (vol. i. p. 465).

The Irish Parliament met in Dublin on the 5th of October, 1692. The business of the session was commenced by the adoption of resolutions excluding Catholics from both Houses. A Committee appointed by the House of Commons reported that "the great number of armed Papists in the country and of able, serviceable horses in their hands, was a great grievance." The House of Lords appointed a "Committee of Religion," who, among other things, reported that "Popish holidays should be abrogated." No further legislative enactments, however, were made in this Parliament against the Irish Catholics. Lord Sydney was at this time Viceroy. He was a man of honour, and seeing clearly the trend of parties to violate the Treaty of Limerick, he, with the approval of the King, dissolved the Parliament. The anti-Catholic faction, however, soon obtained the mastery. Sydney was recalled from Ireland in 1693, and Capel, Wyche, and Duncombe were appointed Lords Justices. The two latter were found to share the views of Lord Sydney.

They were accordingly set aside, and Lord Capel, who was ready to run with the current of anti-Catholic bigotry, was chosen Lord Lieutenant, and by royal mandate convened Parliament on the 27th of August, 1695. The character of Capel is sketched by Harris in a few words: "He studied," he says, "to render himself popular by espousing the interests of the English, without any nice regard to justice or equity."

With such a Viceroy, the Legislature made rapid progress in the work of Penal Laws against the Irish Catholics. The oath of abjuration was required, and thus Catholics were shut out from Parliament. It was enacted that no Catholic should be allowed to keep a horse of the value of more than £5; and the Act provided that no matter how valuable might be the horse owned by a Papist, any Protestant might seize it on the payment of £5 5s. All "Popish" holidays were abrogated, and all "Popish" citizens were ordered to be disarmed. Already a special viceregal edict had commanded all the Catholic Bishops to quit the kingdom, thus practically branding them as outlaws. Now a special Act was passed banishing the Catholic Bishops and the regular clergy: should they return from banishment, they incurred the penalty of treason. Under this Act, all the Bishops that could be discovered, and 454 of the regular clergy were sent into exile in 1698. By further Acts the sending of Catholic children to the Continent for education was interdicted: Catholics were disqualified from the legal profession, and marriage of Protestants with Catholic wives was prohibited. By a special provision in this last enactment, any Protestant marrying a Catholic wife was to be deemed a Papist, and was disabled from sitting in either House of Parliament "unless such person so marrying shall within a year after such marriage procure such wife to be converted to the Protestant religion." Some years later a Committee of the Irish House of Commons decided that under this Act, Protestants married to Catholic wives were disqualified even to vote for members of Parliament.

On the accession of Queen Anne, other Penal Laws followed in quick succession. In 1703 an Act was passed which practically abolished the Catholic landlords of Ireland. It provided :

“That the fee-simple estate of a Catholic, whether acquired by purchase or inheritance, should on the conformity of the eldest son to the State religion be at once converted into an estate for life only ; the father being prohibited from selling, mortgaging, or otherwise disposing of, or dealing with it ; and the Protestant succeeding on the death of the father to the property.

“If the heir-at-law of a Catholic continued to profess the religion of his father, the estate was divided, share and share alike, among the sons. If there were no sons it was divided among the daughters, and, in failure of daughters, among the collateral kindred of the father.

“Catholic fathers were debarred from becoming guardians of their own children if the latter had at any age conformed to the Protestant religion.

“Catholics were rendered incapable of purchasing lands of inheritance, but were allowed to take leases of thirty-one years, with the proviso that if the farm yielded profit to a Papist amounting to more than one-third of the rental, any Protestant informer could eject the Catholic and claim the holding as his own.”

These and a hundred other vexatious enactments brought ruin on the Catholic proprietors. It was stated by a writer in the year 1739, that there were not twenty Catholics in Ireland possessed of property to the amount of £1,000 a year ; and in 1775 Howard wrote that there was “scarcely any landed property left among the Papists.” The whole country was flooded with informers anxious to discover some concealed priest, or to enrich themselves with the lands of the Catholic natives. In a petition presented by the Catholics in 1739, it is stated that “two-thirds of the business of the Four Courts consists of Popish discoveries,” and that the natives were oppressed “by the number of idle and wicked vagrants informing against their leases and tenements.” The

spirit of the law, however, was clearly set forth by the Puisne Sergeant in 1747, when he said: "It is no matter to the public in whose hands the estate is, provided it is not in the hands of a Papist."

One instance will serve to show how sharp was the scent of those informers, and how strictly the letter of the Penal Laws was enforced. A young Catholic named Farrell, anxious to better his material conditions of life, conformed to the Protestant Church, and about ten years afterwards purchased some land in the country of Longford. A Protestant, named Tomlinson, kept a close eye upon this newly-fledged Protestant, and at length claimed his property on the plea that he was not a Protestant according to law. The facts, as set forth in his petition, were to the effect that Farrell had declared himself a Protestant on the 26th of November, 1741, but that he did not partake of the Sacrament in the Protestant Church till the 16th of May, 1742. Now, according to the Penal Laws of 8th Queen Anne, chap 3, no one conforming to the Protestant religion "shall be deemed a Protestant unless he receive the Sacrament within the space of six lunar months after his declaration of conformity," which six months in the present case expired on the 13th of May, 1742. The case was tried in 1759 before the Common Law Judges with a verdict for the informer. Farrell appealed to the Court of Chancery, but it was decided by the Lord Chancellor that Tomlinson "as the first Protestant discoverer, was, by virtue of the Popery Acts, entitled to the benefit of the purchase made by the defendant," and Farrell had moreover to pay the costs of the suit. The case was brought before the House of Lords in England, where the judgements of the Irish Courts were confirmed, and thus Farrell, together with his faith, lost his lands, had to pay all costs, and was reduced to the direst penury.

The whole landed property of the kingdom being transferred to men filled with bitter hatred of the Catholic Faith, the natives, who remained true to their creed, were mercilessly trampled on. Swift, who was

eye-witness of what he describes, thus writes in 1727 : "A great cause of this nation's misery is that Egyptian bondage of cruel, oppressing, covetous landlords ; expecting that all who live under them should make bricks without straw ; who grieve and envy when they see a tenant of their own in a cart, or able to afford one comfortable meal in a month ; by which the spirits of the people are broken and made fit for slavery."

A few years earlier (1718), Dr. Nicholson, Protestant Bishop of Derry, was warned by the Castle not to proceed to his diocese without a military escort. He accordingly set out from Dublin, accompanied by a troop of dragoons. The description of his journey to Derry is from his own pen. "The executive," he says, "were pleased to grant me a guard of dragoons, with whom I travelled in great security through the country said to be infested with a set of barbarous and pilfering tories. I saw no danger of losing the little money I had ; but was under some apprehension of being starved, having never beheld such dismal marks of hunger and want as appeared in the countenances of most of the poor creatures that I met with on the road.

"The poor wretches lie in reeky sod-hovels, and have generally no more than a rag of coarse blanket to cover a small part of their nakedness. Upon the strictest inquiry I could not find that they are better clad, or lodged, in the winter season. These sorry slaves plough the ground to the very tops of their mountains for the service of their lords, who spend truly rack-rents in London."

We cannot be surprised that as the result of this misery and dire oppression, the country was visited with periodical famines which decimated the population. Skelton, writing in 1740, states that famine had prevailed throughout the kingdom in the two years preceding, and that thousands and thousands had fallen victims to it. "Whole parishes," he adds, "in some places were almost desolate, and the dead were eaten in the fields by dogs for the want of people to bury them." Seventeen years

later he again writes : " A dearth is now (1757) spread over the face of the kingdom, and the calamities of a general famine are threatened more than ever they were known to be." At short intervals those terrible famines were again and again repeated till the close of the century.

The Protestant gentry, who held in their hands the whole administration of the laws, had no sympathy with the Catholic farmers, and, being practically irresponsible, threw them into prison at will, or ground them down with the greatest tyranny, and subjected them to indescribable hardships. The tenant was allowed no security in his holding. Should his industry have reclaimed some marshy tract, or cultivated the barren mountain, an enemy was sure to be at hand deeming it little less than a religious duty to deprive him of the fruits of his toil, and to drive him forth from his home unpitied and unrequited. Under such a system the Catholic tenants were reduced to the lowest degree of misery. A writer, in 1766, speaks of them as " naked slaves, who labour without food, and live while they can without houses or covering, under the lash of merciless and relentless taskmasters." By a mockery of legislation, grass-lands were by Act of the Irish Parliament exempted from the payment of the tithes. Thus the rich Protestant proprietors became practically freed from contributing to the support of their own clergy, and the small Catholic farmers were left to the tender mercies of the tithe-proctors, who, " with all the hands of all the harpies," plundered them to secure a rich maintenance for the alien ministers of an alien creed.

The first effect of the Penal Laws, in their social aspect, was to exclude the Irish Catholics from every position of political influence or trust, and to debar them from all means of acquiring either knowledge or wealth. Without apostasy they could not aspire to any of the honourable professions, or to hold even the humblest post in the service of the State. In trade, they were subjected to innumerable disabilities, and in order

to escape from more serious perils, were often obliged to submit to the most vexatious and illegal exactions at the hands of their Protestant competitors. A price was laid on the head of the Catholic schoolmaster as on that of the priest. The law of Habeas Corpus did not extend to Ireland. In the official discourses of the Viceroy, Catholics were pointed out as the enemy against whom all parties in the State were exhorted to combine. As late as the year 1760 the declaration was made by the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and was solemnly repeated by the Chief Justice from the King's Bench, that the laws of the Kingdom "did not suppose any such person to exist as an Irish Papist."

It is needless to say that the trade of the country was discouraged. It was the remark of Swift that the convenience of ports and harbours which nature bestowed so liberally on Ireland was of no more use to her people than a beautiful prospect to a man shut up in a dungeon. If, whilst England was engaged at war with a Catholic state, any Irish Protestant suffered loss from the enemy's privateers, a tax was levied on the Catholics of the district in which he lived to restore to him the full amount of his loss. Should it happen that a Protestant was robbed, and were it supposed that the culprit was a Papist—and I need not say no very strict proofs were required—the loss was compensated at the expense of his Catholic neighbours. Mr. Bushe, in his place in Parliament in 1782, mentioned the following case: A Protestant gentleman in the County of Kilkenny, from whom some property had been stolen, was compensated by a heavy tax thus levied on the Catholics of his district. Very soon after, however, the robber was discovered, and was found to be a Protestant. Nevertheless, no restitution was made to the Catholics for the injury done them. Mr Bushe added that it was a rule with the magistrates, if the robber had been heard to speak with an Irish accent, to account this a sufficient proof of his being a Papist.

So completely were the Catholic laity crushed to the

dust and ignored by the Government that when about the middle of the century an address was drawn up by Charles O'Connor and other leading Catholics to be presented to the King expressive of their loyalty, the Viceroy contemptuously refused to accept or forward it. As late as the year 1793, the Catholics of Connaught presented, through Lord Dillon, a Protestant, a somewhat similar address; such, however, was the fanatical bigotry of the times, that that Protestant nobleman was, in consequence, boycotted by the gentry of the province. It is cheering to find one exception to such anti-Catholic feeling. Dr. Law, the Protestant Bishop of Elphin, proved himself at this time a devoted friend and earnest advocate of the Catholics of the West, whose virtue and industry and peaceable demeanour he did not fail to extol. He thus wrote in 1795: "Many joined the Catholics when they thought them likely to succeed, but I was a friend, when a friend only can be known, in their adversity. Shocked at the abominable severities to which I saw them subjected, I considered their cause the cause of justice and humanity, and as such have supported it."

But to return to the barbarous legislation by which it was sought to root out the Catholic Faith from the hearts of the Irish people, it was penal even to assist at Mass. Nevertheless, a Catholic was liable at any moment to be summoned by the local magistrate to answer on oath in what place he had last heard Mass, by whom the Mass was celebrated, and whether there was any priest or Catholic schoolmaster concealed in the district. Should he refuse to answer these queries, he was subjected to fine and imprisonment. If any person concealed or entertained a priest after the 1st of May, 1698, he was to be fined £20 for the first offence, £40 for the second, and for the third he should suffer the loss of all real and personal property, half of which, if it did not exceed £100, was to go to the informer, the rest to the king. The penalty for sending children out of the kingdom to be educated, or for instructing them at home in the

Catholic Faith, was "forfeiture of all legal rights, as well as of all real and personal property." If a labourer refused to work on a Catholic holiday, he had to pay a fine, and in default of payment was punished by whipping. A heavy fine was imposed for burying in the old consecrated churchyards, or for taking part in pilgrimages and other public acts of devotion; and magistrates were requested to demolish all crosses, pictures, and inscriptions that were anywhere set up. A Catholic parent could not appoint a Catholic guardian for his children. Should the parents de cease before the child had attained his twenty-first year, a Protestant guardian was at once appointed by Government, and it became his duty to bring up the child in Protestant tenets.

Catholics had no vote for the representation in Parliament. They were excluded from the privileges of freemen; they had no voice in any corporate or civil appointments. They could not hold even the responsible post of attorney's clerk, or of night watchman in any corporate town. By special rule, no Catholic was permitted to be present in the gallery of the House of Commons in Dublin. In the MS. Minute Book of the borough of Ennis there is an entry, setting forth that "the nest of boxes," and the brass mortars, and the scales of the Protestant apothecary of that town, were duly seized and sold by auction in penalty of his having associated to himself "one James Hickey, a known Papist, and one who refused to sign the Declaration and to take the oaths." The determination to crush out every Irish industry extended even to the humblest trades. From Folkestone and Aldborough petitions were presented to Government complaining that Irishmen were allowed to catch herrings at Waterford and Wexford, and to send them across the straits for sale. Other petitions were forwarded, praying that all fisheries might be prohibited on the Irish coasts, except in boats built and manned by Englishmen. In the Irish House of Commons a petition was presented by the coal-porters

of Dublin, complaining that one Darby Ryan, a head coal-porter, employed several Papists in that trade. It was even urged upon the Government not to allow Catholics to be employed as servants in Protestant families. "If we would give encouragement to English Protestants," writes the Protestant Primate, "and endeavour the increasing of their numbers in the Kingdom of Ireland, then there ought to be a strict law made and duly put in execution against all such Protestants as shall receive Irish Papists into their houses and families."

No means were left untried to add to the numbers as well as to enhance the privileges of the Protestants in Ireland. In 1709, a numerous colony of Protestants, generally known as Palatines, was brought over from Germany to Ireland. Houses were built for them, farms were allotted them at rents of favour, leases were granted them, and a special subsidy was voted by Parliament to aid them in the purchase of stock for their farms. In a Report of the Commissioners addressed to Parliament, it is said that "the gentry were very fond of them, being Protestants," and that £24,000 of the public money had been expended in settling and maintaining them. It was soon found by their patrons that these strangers were more troublesome than useful. The Palatines considered that they were badly treated, not getting the land rent free; from time to time they stole away "without giving the gentlemen that entertained them at great expense any notice." The Irish House of Lords, in 1711, adopted a resolution lamenting that the nation should have incurred a load of debt "in bringing over numbers of useless and indigent Palatines." Nevertheless, some of them continued for three-quarters of a century to enjoy undisturbed their houses and lands. When, however, the leases expired, the Palatine colonists gradually disappeared, or became absorbed in the Catholic population. The Protestant Archbishop Synge estimated, in 1715, that no less than 50,000 Scotch families had settled in Ulster since the beginning of William the Third's reign. Everything worth having in

the country passed into their hands. Dr. Anthony Coyle, Bishop of Raphoe, writes to the Secretary of Propaganda, in the year 1786, that in his diocese the Catholics were reduced to about 40,000, and dwelt for the most part in the mountains. The heretics were almost equal in number, holding the rich valleys and the towns. "There is no city in the diocese," he adds; "and as for the cathedral, it is needless for me to speak of it, for, together with all the revenues of the See, it is in the hands of the pseudo-bishop."¹ In consequence of the number of colonists thus imported from Great Britain and the Continent, several towns, such as Belurbet, and Coleraine, and Midleton continued for a long time exclusively Protestant. In Carrickfergus and its neighbourhood, about the middle of the century, there were only a few Catholics, but no priest. In the town and parish of Holywood there was but one solitary Catholic. He was a coachman in the service of a Protestant gentleman named Isaac; and when he drove his master through the town the inhabitants used to run to their doors "to have a look at the Papist."

¹ Catholics pro majori parte incolunt montes, et numeratis omnibus totius Dioecesis, non sunt plures quam quadraginta millia. Haeretici eundem fere numerum faciunt et planities et oppida, quae sunt tantum quinque, ut plurimum occupant. Nulla est civitas, etsi existat Cathedralis, cujus descriptio non est praesentis instituti, siquidem ea utitur Pseudo-Episcopus cum omnibus redditibus annexis.—*Relatio*, presented to the S.C. of Propaganda, in 1786.

CHAPTER THE SECOND

The conversion of Protestants beset with many difficulties under the Penal Laws; nevertheless many were converted—Protestants subjected to disabilities by marriage with Catholics—Disabilities of Catholics regarding landed property—Curious law regarding the children of mixed marriages—Dr. Young, Bishop of Limerick—Catholics prohibited the use of firearms, and excluded from the army—Every one wearing the soldier's uniform was held to be a Protestant—How some farmers in Ulster qualified themselves to hold arms—Irish Catholics not enrolled in the British army in the war of American Independence—Froude's statement refuted—Catholics not allowed a horse of greater value than £5—Remarkable instances—A few Catholics retain a portion of family estates—O'Connell of Glencara—Fidelity of Irish Catholics—Unbroken succession of bishops and priests—Registration of clergy—Further edicts against the clergy—Rewards offered for their arrest and for apostasy—The bishops and priests travel about in disguise and face every peril—Words of Lecky—Bernard McMahon and Michael O'Reilly, Archbishops of Armagh—Narrow escape of Dr. McColgan, Bishop of Derry—Bishop of Kilmore disguised as a Highland piper—Dr. O'Gallagher, Bishop of Raphoe, and Father O'Hegarty—The priest murdered—Bishops of Kildare seek shelter in the Bog of Allen—Words of Dr. Doyle—Self-sacrificing zeal of Dr. James O'Keefe.

THE conversion of Protestants to the Catholic faith in Ireland, throughout the whole period of the Penal Laws, was beset with the severest pains and penalties. The convert at once forfeited all the rights and privileges which he had hitherto enjoyed. He was, moreover, regarded as an enemy of the State, and punished as such; and the priest who was instrumental in his conversion became subject to the same penalties. At the

Spring Assizes in Wexford, in 1748, Mr. George Williams was adjudged guilty "of being perverted from the Protestant to the Popish religion," and was sentenced to be "out of the king's protection ; his lands and tenements, goods and chattels, to be forfeited to the king, and his body to remain at the king's pleasure."¹ Two years later, a priest, named John Hely, was indicted in Tipperary for "perverting a dying Protestant"; and as he did not appear for trial, he was, in usual form, presented as an outlaw by the Grand Jury, to be punished as "a tory, robber, and rapparee of the Popish religion, in arms, and on his keeping."² Nevertheless many Protestants were led to embrace the truth. The Protestant Primate, Boulter, in his letters to the Government in England, bitterly lamented that "the descendants of many of Cromwell's officers here have gone off to Popery." And in 1747 we find renewed complaints from Galway, to the effect that "of late years several old Protestants, and the children of such, have been perverted to the Popish religion."³

A Protestant who, being married to a Catholic lady, failed within twelve months to make her a Protestant, forfeited his civil rights, and incurred all the risks and penalties of a reputed Papist. At the Limerick election, in the year 1760, several voters were objected to on the ground that they had Popish wives ; and in due course their votes were declared null. By another clause in the Act of Parliament any barrister, attorney, or solicitor, presuming to marry a Papist, became by the very fact disqualified from continuing in his profession.⁴ A Protestant lady possessed of, or heir to any real property, or who held personal property to the amount of £500, by marrying a Catholic forfeited her whole property, which passed at once into the hands of the nearest Protestant relative. If in a Catholic family the

¹ See *Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1748.

² Irish Rec. Office, Presentments of Grand Juries, 1750.

³ Boulter's *Letters*, ii. 12 ; Hardiman's *Galway*, p. 188.

⁴ 7 George II. chap. 4.

eldest son declared himself a Protestant, he became entitled to the whole property; the father could no longer dispose of any portion of it, and all the claims of the other children were set aside. As Catholics could not hold land in fee, it sometimes happened that they purchased property under the name of some friendly Protestant, on whose honour and integrity they thought it safe to rely. To punish this evasion of the law, an Act was passed annulling all such purchases; and as an encouragement to informers, it was decreed that whoever, not being himself a Papist, would make the discovery of such a purchase, the property so discovered should become his prize.

When the child of a mixed marriage was baptized by a priest, the Protestant parent became classified among the reputed Papists, and had to suffer all the penalties of such offenders. The father of Dr. Young, Catholic Bishop of Limerick, was a Protestant, married to a Catholic lady. The infant was baptized by a Catholic priest. Mr. Young was immediately thrown into prison, where he was detained for a considerable time, and he was, moreover, subjected to a heavy fine. One happy result followed from this punishment. Mr. Young came out of prison a Catholic, and his son in after years became one of the holiest Bishops who adorned the Irish Church in those perilous times.

Catholics were most jealously excluded from the use of firearms. No Irish Catholic could be a gamekeeper, or hold the humblest post that was supposed to involve the possession or the use of firearms. He could not even be a private soldier in the army. When Primate Boulter recommended the Government to make Ireland their recruiting ground for the army, he took care to add that none should be enrolled unless they produced certificates of being Protestants and the children of Protestants. In 1719, the Lieutenant-Colonel commanding in Limerick, wrote to the Castle that the officers had used every diligence to find out whether there were any Papists in the army, "that several had been committed prisoners

upon suspicion, and, though no certain proofs could be obtained of their being Papists, they were turned out of the regiment." Again, in 1724, Colonel Fleming, writing from Galway, declared the report, that some of his soldiers had gone to Mass, to be "a notorious falsehood." He adds, that soon after his arrival in Galway, he had suspicions of one soldier, named Oliver Browne, "that he was a Papist"; and finding it to be the case, "the day following he had him tried by a regimental court-martial, who ordered him to be three times whipped through the regiment, and then to be drummed out of the garrison, which was accordingly done."¹ In 1757 an order was issued from England to enlist soldiers in the North of Ireland; but instructions were at the same time given to the recruiting officers to "take care not to enlist Papists, or persons Popishly affected." So, too, by letter of March 31, 1759, it was permitted to enlist recruits in any part of Ireland, but the clause was added, "provided that they be Protestants and were born of Protestant parents." About the year 1775 some Catholic Highlanders had been enrolled in the army, and the officers, anxious to secure their services, had put no questions to them as to their religion. The Holy See, being soon after interrogated whether it would be lawful for Irish Catholics to accept commissions in the army in the same tacit manner, the question was referred back to the Archbishop of Dublin for his opinion. He replied by letter of the 20th of August, 1777, that he considered it would be unlawful for them to do so, and he instanced that in the very last session of Parliament in Dublin, when some members of the Opposition taunted the Government with admitting Papists into the army, the Ministry affirmed that such a statement was quite contrary to fact, and that "any one voluntarily assuming the soldier's uniform, by the very fact was to be considered a Protestant; for, by the special laws of the Kingdom, to wear that uniform was to renounce any sect the soldier

¹ Irish Rec. Office, June 12, 1724.

may hitherto have belonged to, and to embrace the Protestant faith." To illustrate further the case, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Carpenter, stated that in the late war, a Catholic having enlisted in the hope of his religion being tolerated, found, to his cost, what a mistake he had made. He took occasion, on peace being proclaimed, to go to Mass, but was at once thrown into prison and subjected to other severe penalties.¹ Towards the close of the century, when the armed Orangemen, in many parts of Ulster, plundered the Catholic farmers with impunity, the parishioners of one district resolved to be present for one Sunday at the Protestant service, thus to qualify themselves for the permission to hold arms. Accordingly they proceeded in a body to the Protestant church, and their wives accompanied them. The minister was beginning to address his thin and scattered congregation when, to his great surprise, a great tramp was heard, and the whole body of the parishioners entered. Some walked straight up to the communion table and sat down on it, others went to the baptismal font to sprinkle themselves with holy water; but most of them knelt down, took out their beads, and in quite an audible manner recited the Rosary. As late as the year 1792 permission was refused to Catholics to enter the army. It was only in the following year that the ranks were thrown open to them. So strict was the law which thus interdicted the use of arms to the Catholics, that even a Protestant servant of a Catholic master was not permitted to hold or use firearms.

The question was discussed with considerable warmth a few years ago in the United States, what part was taken by the Irish Catholics in the War of Independence. From the above facts the answer to this question must be apparent. It is true that the Irish Parliament granted ten regiments, which formed the whole available military

¹ Notum est quod in ultimo bello, miles Catholicus sub prae-fatis conditionibus conscriptus, pace postea restituta, ad carcerem et ad alias severissimas poenas condemnatus fuerit, propterea quod Missam audierit.—From Dr. Carpenter's MSS. in Archiv. Dubliniensis.

force of Ireland, and sent them to fight the battles of Great Britain in the United States. But these regiments were exclusively Protestant, and the Irish Catholics had no part in that expedition. For several years previous to 1777, a large number of Irish Catholics had sought a home in the United States. These emigrants were in the full vigour of manhood, and, no doubt, fought in all the battles of the War of Independence; but it is needless to say they were not to be found on the side of England, and I have no hesitation in accepting as accurate Mr. Plowden's statement: "It is a fact beyond question, that most of the early successes in America were immediately owing to the vigorous exertions and prowess of the Irish emigrants who bore arms in that cause" (vol. ii. p. 178). Mr. Froude¹ has laid great stress on a memorial presented to Government by some Irish Catholic noblemen, in 1775, in which, after referring to a subscription towards the American war, which had been declined, they solicited permission to take arms against the rebels. These few noblemen, however, no more represented the sentiments of the Irish Catholics of those days, than did the Catholic Peers of the present day who voted against the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, the Home Rule Bill, and other similar measures, though unanimously demanded by the Irish people.

I have already referred to the Penal Law by which Catholics were not allowed to have any horse of greater value than £5. In the deeds of sale and in the leases of the last century, many singular clauses are met with from time to time, such as the prohibition to sub-let to Papists, or to permit a Catholic place of worship on the property; but, perhaps, the most curious clause of all is that which required the tenant to keep "Protestant horses." This clause had a double effect: it ensured horses of higher value than £5 for the cultivation of the land, and it kept the tenant more and more at the landlord's mercy, for at

¹ Froude, *The English in Ireland*, ii. 176. With his usual inaccuracy he states in the preceding page that "few or none (of the Catholics) had as yet sought a transatlantic home."

any moment, by proffering the legal amount, these horses could be appropriated by the landlord or his agents. Some curious instances are narrated in connection with this penal restriction. A gentleman of the County Meath, named MacGeoghegan, was driving into Mullingar with a splendid pair of horses, when a vile Protestant offered the legal price and claimed the horses. The gentleman took out his pistols and shot his horses. He did not, however, lay aside his carriage, but trained a pair of Spanish oxen, and with them continued to drive his carriage as before. In Waterford, a Catholic merchant, who had realized a large fortune, excited the jealousy of some of the Protestant gentry by the splendour of his equipage, and his horses were accordingly seized on. He had his revenge. He trained four fine bulls, and whenever the Grand Jury met in Waterford, he drove his four-in hand through the streets, the gentry flying before him in all directions. It is also recorded of a Catholic priest named Barnewall, who had been presented with a handsome steed, which was claimed in the same way. The horse was surrendered, but as the new proprietor was riding away, Father Barnewall reminded him that he had no right to the bridle and saddle. The stranger scoffed at this suggestion, whereupon the priest, with a blow of his whip, stretched him on the ground. Father Barnewall was immediately taken before a justice of the peace, but the friendly magistrate acquitted him on the plea that the complainant was taking forcible possession of accoutrements to which he had no claim.

A few Catholics continued to retain, in remote places, some portions of their family estates, but they found it necessary to court obscurity, for they knew too well that their hold on such property depended on its being hidden from the gaze of Irish Protestants. When Mr. Smith was in search of materials for his *History of Kerry*, and visited Glencara—a small estate belonging to the O'Connell family, so happily hidden in the Kerry mountains that it had escaped confiscation—he received a great deal of kindness from its proprietor; but the

request was made to him that the family should be left unnoticed in his work. "We have peace and comfort here," said Mr. O'Connell; "we love the faith of our fathers, and amidst the seclusion of these glens we enjoy a respite from persecution. If you make mention of me or mine the solitude of the sea-shore will no longer be our security; the Sassenagh will scale these mountains, and we shall be driven upon the world without house or home."

Mr. Lecky, in his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, having at considerable length set forth the sufferings and disabilities of the Irish Catholics, adds the following glowing eulogy on the fidelity of the Irish people :—

"They clung to their old faith with a constancy that never has been surpassed, during generations of the most galling persecution, at a time when every earthly motive urged them to abandon it, when all the attractions and influence of property and rank and professional eminence and education were arrayed against it. They voluntarily supported their priesthood with an unwearying zeal, when they themselves were sunk in most abject poverty, when the agonies of starvation were continually before them. They had their reward. The legislator, abandoning the hopeless task of crushing a religion that was so cherished, contented himself with providing that those who held it should never rise to influence or wealth, and the Penal Laws were at last applied almost exclusively to this end."¹

Throughout the whole period of persecution in Ireland the succession of bishops and priests was never broken. As was to be expected, however, many were the sufferings of those devoted men whilst they endeavoured to minister to their flocks. It was enacted under William III. (7th and 9th William III. chap. 25) that all the Catholic archbishops, bishops, and regulars, should depart the kingdom, under penalty of imprison-

¹ Lecky, *History*, ii. 256, 386.

ment and transportation; and should they at any time return to Ireland they were to be considered guilty of high treason, and to suffer accordingly. In 1704 another Act was passed by which only a certain number of the parochial clergy, duly registered, were to be tolerated in each county. A particular district was allotted to each one, but no other priests were to be tolerated on any account, and all save those now registered were to be punished as regulars.

New difficulties, however, very soon awaited the privileged clergy. By a special clause in this Registration Act, a registered priest who would presume to take a curate to aid him in the work of the sacred ministry was subjected to all the penalties enacted against the regulars; and furthermore, if he administered the Sacraments, or said Mass outside of his own registered district, he incurred the same penalties. An edict was published commanding the priests thus registered to take the oath of abjuration; and as all, with scarcely an exception, refused to stain their consciences by such an oath, all alike were thenceforward subjected to the direst penalties of the law. At any moment they were liable to be arrested, thrown into prison, and sent into exile.

The better to give effect to these enactments, the Irish Parliament in 1709 passed a resolution declaring that to inform against a priest was an honourable act, deserving the nation's gratitude. A reward was voted of £50 for the discovery of a bishop, or vicar-general or other dignitary, and of £20 for the arrest of any other clergyman, secular or regular. Besides these Parliamentary grants, other rewards were offered from time to time by the grand juries; and as late as 1743 a proclamation was issued by the Privy Council in Dublin, offering for the conviction of a bishop or dignitary the sum of £150; for every priest, £50; and for the discovery of persons who, being in the possession of a certain amount of property, had nevertheless been guilty of entertaining, concealing, or

relieving a priest, £200. Other Acts of Parliament offered annuities and large rewards to such of the clergy as might choose to apostatize.

But neither bribes nor threats could sever the pastors from their flocks. With heroic courage the clergy braved every peril to break the bread of life to their faithful people. Except during short intervals of comparative peace, they were obliged to travel from district to district in disguise; and they joyfully endured the privations and humiliations and hardships to which they were every day exposed. Whilst they offered the Holy Sacrifice they wore a veil over the face, or the altar and sanctuary were screened by a curtain, so that the faithful could hear the voice without recognizing the celebrant. During the day they were clad in frieze like the peasantry, and they usually carried a wallet across the shoulders, the better to conceal their ministry. Thus they passed from cabin to cabin dispensing blessings, instructing the young, and administering the Sacraments; they lived with the peasantry and partook of their humble fare, which was at all times heartily shared with them. Mr. Lecky does not fail to recognize the heroism thus displayed by the devoted clergy:—

“Their conduct,” he says, “in many respects was very noble. The zeal with which they maintained the religious life of their flocks during the long period of persecution is beyond all praise. In the very dawn of the Reformation in Ireland Spenser had contrasted the negligence of the ‘idle ministers,’ the creatures of a corrupt patronage—who, ‘having the livings of a country opened unto them, without pains and without peril, will, neither for any love of God, nor for zeal for religion, nor for all the good they may do by winning souls to God, be drawn forth of their warm nests to look out into God’s harvest’—with the zeal of Popish priests, who ‘spare not to come out of Spain, from Rome, and from Rheims, by long toil and dangerous travelling hither, where they know that peril of death awaiteth them, and

no reward or riches is to be found, only to draw the people unto the Church of Rome.' The same fervid zeal was displayed by the Catholic priesthood in the days of the Cromwellian persecution, and during all the long period of the Penal Laws."¹

The Archbishop of Armagh, Dr. Bernard McMahon, lived in disguise for many years at Ballymascanlon, in the County of Louth, under the assumed name of Mr. Ennis. Writing to the Archbishop of Dublin on the 7th of November, 1741, he states that he had been of late obliged to fly from his usual place of refuge, on account of four magistrates being in search of him, armed with warrants for his arrest. Another of the Primates, Dr. Michael O'Reilly, whose excellent catechism is still in use in some dioceses of Ulster, generally resided in the parish of Termonfeckin. A few years ago, when stopping for a short time in that neighbourhood, the writer of these pages was conducted by a reverend friend to visit the house in which the Primate had lived. It is a small thatched house, and inside, under the thatch, there is a narrow loft, formed of the dried branches of trees, where at times Dr. O'Reilly used to be concealed, whilst the priest-catchers were in close pursuit. In the adjoining orchard a fine old apple tree is pointed out, under which, like St. Philip Neri on the Janiculum, the Primate was wont to gather the little children around him to instruct them in the catechism. At a short distance from the hut, at a spot where the main road crosses a little stream, tradition tells that he remained bent under the arch, and up to his knees in the water, while a troop of military galloped along the road and scoured the country in search of him.

Dr. John McColgan was appointed to the See of Derry in 1752. When he entered on his episcopal charge, he lived in a whitewashed cottage at Muff, in the County Donegal. Soon, however, the storm of persecution became more threatening, and he was compelled to take

¹ Lecky, *History*, ii. 282.

refuge in his native mountains of Carndonagh, in Inishowen. Here he remained for a few days concealed in the house of a Presbyterian farmer, who had often befriended him. One evening, as this man was engaged ploughing a field which extended from his house to the river, a messenger came running towards him in breathless haste, announcing that a party in search of the bishop was at hand. Without a moment's delay the farmer unyoked the horses, and setting the bishop upon one, and accompanying him upon the other, never drew bridle till they reached the village of Lenankeel. Here the bishop found a boat, and got in safety to Fannett. They were only a short time gone when the pursuers arrived in Carndonagh. They reported that "they found the nest, indeed, but the bird was gone." Soon after, this good bishop, worn out by anxieties and fatigue, was summoned to his reward. Two priests sat by his bedside in his last moments, and one of them has recorded his dying words, "My soul to God and the Blessed Virgin," spoken in the Irish language which he knew and loved so well. Dr. McColgan rests in peace in a lone churchyard in the parish of Culduff, where once stood a noble monastery, embosomed in the mountains, and in sight of the waves of the western ocean.

Some few years ago an English gentleman paid a passing visit to the house of the venerable Bishop of Kilmore. He was very much struck by the portraits of the bishop's predecessors which adorned the sitting-room, but could not conceal his surprise that the place of honour between two of these portraits was allotted to a Highland piper in full costume. Still greater, however, was his surprise when he learned from the lips of the bishop that that was the portrait of one of the most illustrious of his predecessors, who, being a skilled musician, availed himself of such a disguise in order to visit and console his scattered flock.

Dr. James O'Gallagher, Bishop of Raphoe, when holding a visitation in the parish of Killygarvan, in the year 1743, partook of the hospitality of its parish priest,

Father O'Hegarty, whose humble residence stood on the left bank of Lough Swilly, opposite the fair and fertile district of Fahan. It soon began to be whispered about that the bishop was in the neighbourhood, and without delay the priest-catchers were upon his track. One evening a note was handed to him from a Protestant gentleman inviting him to dinner. Whilst he read the letter, the messenger said to him in Irish, "As you value your life, have nothing to say to that man," a hint of intended treachery which the bishop easily understood. That night Dr. O'Gallagher retired to rest at an early hour; but, as he could not sleep, he rose at midnight and resolved to depart. The good priest, however, would not listen to his doing so, and insisted on his retiring again to rest. "The way is dangerous and lonely," he said, "and it will be quite in time for you to leave at dawn of morning." The bishop tried again to take some rest, but sleep had fled from him, and after a short time he again rose, and long before the morning sun had lit up the cliffs of Bennagallah, Dr. O'Gallagher was on the bridle road to Rathmullen. At sunrise a troop of the military was seen hastening from Milford. They surrounded Father O'Hegarty's house, and soon the shout was heard from them, "Out with the Popish Bishop!" A local magistrate named Buchanan was their leader, and great was their rage and disappointment when Father O'Hegarty assured them that the bishop had been there, indeed, but had taken his departure. They would have some victim, however, for they did not wish it to be said that their nocturnal excursion from Milford had been in vain. They accordingly seized the aged priest, and, binding his hands behind his back, carried him off a prisoner. The news spread along the route, and the cry was echoed from hill to hill that their loved pastor was being hurried off to prison. A crowd soon gathered, and showed their determination to set him free; but Buchanan, raising a pistol, shot him dead on the spot, and threw his lifeless body on the roadside. Dr. O'Gallagher sought refuge for a time in one of the

small islands of Lough Erne, and a few years later was translated to Kildare.

No less hardships and perils awaited the Catholic bishop in the rich plains of Leinster than amid the rugged hills of Donegal. The illustrious Dr. Doyle, whose name shines so brightly on the roll of the bishops of Kildare, has left the following sketch of the labours of Dr. O'Gallagher in this See:—

“This bishop was eminent in the most perilous times for his learning, piety, and zeal. He seldom had a residence, but went about like his Divine Master, doing good, preaching the Gospel, encouraging the faithful, and consoling the afflicted people. For some years previous to his death he resided for a part of each year in a small hut of mud walls, thatched with straw or rushes, near the Bog of Allen, to which he might fly when sought after by the myrmidons of the ruling faction. The remains of his cabin still exist on the road from Allen to Robertstown, on the right hand as you proceed. They form a sort of ill-shapen mound or mounds, and are separated by a ditch from the highway, as it passes over a small eminence which looks down on the vast moor or bog beneath.”[†]

On another occasion, whilst visiting the parochial district of Allen, the same illustrious bishop, Dr. Doyle, gave expression to his sentiments of reverence and veneration for his predecessors in the Sees of Kildare and Leighlin in the following words: “I am here placed in the centre of an immense bog, which takes its name from a small hill, under whose declivity the chapel and house are built where I now write. What, perhaps, interests me most in the wide and vast expanse of the Bog of Allen is, that it afforded for nearly two centuries a place of refuge to the apostolic men who have gone before me in preaching the faith and administering the Sacraments to a people in every way worthy of such pastors. The haunts and retreats

[†] Fitzpatrick, *Life of Dr. Doyle* (2nd edit.), i. 239.

frequented by the Bishops of Kildare in the times of persecution are still pointed out by the aged inhabitants of these marshes with a sort of pride mingled with piety, and they say, 'There he administered confirmation; here he held an assembly of the clergy; on that hill he ordained some young priests. He sometimes left us with a staff in his hand, and being absent for months, we feared he would never return; but he always came back, until he closed his days amongst us. Oh! if you saw him; he was like St. Patrick himself.' What think you, my dear friend, must be my reflections at hearing of the danger, and labours, and virtues of these good men, and what a reproach to my own sloth and sensuality and pride? They of whom the world was not worthy, and who went about in fens and morasses, in nakedness, and thirst, and hunger, and watching, and terror, will be witnesses against me for not using to the best advantage the blessings which their merits have obtained from God for their children. Their spirit, indeed, seems to dwell here, and in these remote and uncultivated districts there are found a purity and simplicity of morals truly surprising."

The immediate successor of Dr. O'Gallagher in the united Sees of Kildare and Leighlin was Dr. James O'Keefe. He ruled these dioceses for thirty-six years, and throughout the greater part of his eventful episcopate was subjected to all the hardships and dangers of the era of persecution. The following brief MS. sketch of his life is from the pen of Dr. Doyle:—

"At the time when he was called to the care of these dioceses, the persecution raged violently, yet his courage and his zeal sustained him. He visited every part of his extensive dioceses frequently, sojourning for a time at Kildare, again at Tullow, often at Dunleckney, and still oftener at the houses of his friends; for he had scarcely any income, and when money was given to him he only retained it until he was met by some victim of distress. From his letters which I have perused it may be collected that he was often in want of the most common necessa-

ries, yet he never complains. He preached the word of God incessantly, often in glens and bogs, for chapels in his time were few and wretched. In all things he bore the appearance of a man of God, and so gained upon the minds and the hearts of those with whom he conversed, whether they were of his own fold or of the strayed sheep, that his virtue stemmed, as it were, the torrent of persecution, and gave peace to his people in his days. Religion seemed to arise at his call from the grave in which she was buried, and the vineyard assigned to him changed from a state of desolation to comparative fruitfulness. God blessed his words and works, in both of which he was powerful. I cannot find that he made any will, unless to desire that his remains would be interred in 'the graves,' a piece of ground adjoining the town, which in the time of persecution had been granted to the Catholics for the burial of their dead, their parish church and its cemetery having been appropriated to the use of the despoilers of the country. Here he desired that his remains should be laid amongst the poor for whom he had lived and with whom after death he desired to be associated. A faithful servant who had long attended him, attached to him more by love than by reward or gain, had secreted from his master for some time five pounds. He had rescued it from the hands of the poor for whom it was destined, and reserved it to purchase a coffin and a shroud for their Father when he would be borne to the tomb. These five pounds defrayed the funeral expenses of Bishop O'Keefe."

CHAPTER THE THIRD

Banishment of Dr. Daton, Bishop of Ossory—His last will—The Grand Jury of Kilkenny ask for the arrest of Dr. O'Shaughnessy—Thomas de Burgo—Dr. Sweetman, Bishop of Ferns, in Newgate Prison—Froude's description of same—Dr. Lynch, Archbishop of Tuam—He tells of the sufferings of his brother prelates—Consecration of his successor in Connemara—Alarm of the Grand Jury of the County of Galway—Archbishop O'Gara and the apostate Lord Athenry—Report on the state of Popery in Tuam—Similar reports from other districts—Dr. Phillips in the Islands of Arran—Dr. Hart, Bishop of Achonry—Betrayed by a false friend—Some incidents—Appointment of Dr. O'Rourke to the See of Killalla—Priest-hunters on his track—Belanagare a rendezvous for the Catholics of Connaught—Young Charles O'Conor—Ambrose McDermott, Bishop of Elphin—His arrest in London—Interesting letter from Antwerp—Memorial in behalf of Dr. Comerford, Archbishop of Cashel—His successors in the See—Dr. O'Keefe, Bishop of Limerick, driven into exile—Ten official documents relating to the imprisonment and banishment of Dr. Sleyne, Bishop of Cork and Cloyne.

TOWARDS the close of the seventeenth century the Bishop of Ossory, Dr. Daton, was sent into exile in France. His last will and testatment, made before quitting his loved diocese, is dated the 11th of April, 1698. It begins with the words: "Whereas I am banished by order of the Government." He had nothing to dispose of but a few books and sacred vessels and vestments. These he wished to be distributed among the clergy of the diocese and the parishes of the city of Kilkenny, in case he should die in banishment; but he adds the words, "In case I should return back to this kingdom again, I intend that the aforesaid things should remain to my own use

and disposition." For fifteen years he ate the bread of exile, till his death in 1713. Another Bishop of Ossory, Colman O'Shaughnessy, towards the middle of the century was subjected to special persecution, and lived for the most part concealed in the parish of Gowran. The Grand Jury of Kilkenny made a presentment in 1744, praying the Government to take steps "for the arrest of Colman O'Shaughnessy, Titular Bishop of Ossory," on the grounds that he had been domestic chaplain of the Pretender, and had been appointed solely through his influence. Of another illustrious bishop, Thomas de Burgo, who adorned the same See in times of comparative peace, the small thatched house in Maudlin Street, in the city of Kilkenny, remained standing till our own day. Even with the additions which had been made to it from time to time it sufficed of itself to attest the many difficulties which had beset the path of the Irish clergy, who in those perilous times laboured with a persevering devotedness, unsurpassed in the annals of any other country, to hand down to the more privileged faithful of the present day the sacred deposit of Divine Truth.

In the neighbouring diocese of Ferns Dr. Sweetman was arrested and thrown into Newgate, where he was detained for several months in 1751. He was remarkable for his stature and manly bearing, and the only ground for his arrest was the whisper of some apostate that the worthy bishop was a foreign officer in disguise. The description of Newgate Prison in those days, given from the Parliamentary reports by Mr. Froude, will enable us to understand why it was that imprisonment in it was regarded with such horror in the last century:—

"The prisons," he says, "were dens of infamy and extortion. Newgate meant a dungeon, starvation, and irons. The Sheriff Marshal was allowed a separate gaol of his own, called the Black Dog. At both prisons he made a trade of vending liquors. Each prisoner consigned, though but for a night, to the Black Dog was taxed two shillings for a treat, and if he refused was beaten and stripped. The charge for a bed was a shilling

a night. Each room was a mere closet, and in many of these closets were five beds. In each bed three, four, or five persons were set to sleep if the place was crowded, and two shillings were extorted from each. . . . Newgate, when the House of Commons Committee visited it (in 1729) was found choking with prisoners. Wretched objects were lying naked on the ground, some dying, some dead of cold and hunger. Some had been four days without food of any kind. The Committee inquired what allowance of bread was made to the Crown prisoners, and found that the custom of allowing bread had for some time been discontinued. The stench among the naked, starving felons was so intolerable that the Committee fled after a stay of half a minute."

If we turn to the ecclesiastical province of Tuam, the Most Reverend Archbishop Lynch resided at Clonbur, near Cong, but after the fatal battle of Aughrim, in 1691, was compelled to seek safety in France. His term of exile continued to his death, on the 31st of October, 1713. From Paris on the 28th of October, 1692, he addressed a letter to the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, in which he thus pathetically sketches the hardships endured by his brother prelates :—

"Since my escape to France from Ireland, many pious ecclesiastics, amongst others the Bishops of Meath and Ferns, have suffered death at the hands of our enemies. The Archbishop of Dublin continued to reside as long as possible in his diocese, but finding he could not conceal himself in the city, nor escape the snares of the heretics, he took refuge with his friends in the country, and lay concealed sometimes in caves and caverns, or wandered through the woods and mountains. He was at length discovered, conveyed to Dublin, and cast into a loathsome prison, where he endured repeated insults and great misery and hardship. On one occasion, indeed, he was liberated on giving bail to appear, but of what avail was this brief respite? He was again arrested, the same tortures repeated, guards were set

to watch him in a filthy underground prison cell, until, worn out with heavy afflictions, this faithful servant was called to his Master, to enjoy the reward of so much suffering. The Archbishop of Dublin is now two months dead. God grant that he may have a successor who will imitate his piety, and show the same zeal in the sacred ministry.”¹

The succession of pastors in the See of Tuam continued unbroken despite the storm of persecution that raged with unabated fury throughout the province. Dr. Francis Burke, the successor of Archbishop Lynch, was consecrated “in his place of refuge” on the mountains of Connemara, on the 4th of April, 1714. The following year at the Lent Assizes, the Grand Jury of the County of Galway informed the Judges that “friars were returning to the neighbourhood of their old abbeys in great numbers, to Ross near Headford, to Athenry, and other places; that unregistered priests were actually discovered reading Mass; and that great numbers of the Catholic gentry were sending their sons abroad to receive foreign education.” The next archbishop, Bernard O’Gara, was also consecrated in his place of refuge on the 24th of May, 1724. Two years later the family of the Berminghams was brought to dishonour by the apostasy of Lord Athenry. The archbishop addressed a paternal exhortation to the wretched apostate, which he entrusted to a messenger named Thady Glyn to deliver. The letter was however discovered, and forwarded to the Irish House of Lords, who adopted a resolution to the effect that “the Papist Archbishop of Tuam hath insolently misrepresented his Lordship of Athenry”; and accordingly an order was issued in 1731 for the arrest of the said archbishop, and of Thady Glyn. This order was repeated on the 13th of October, 1733, but the culprits could not be found. At this time Dr. Vesey, the Protestant Archbishop of Tuam, presented a return to the House of Lords of the state of

¹ The original Latin text of this letter may be seen in the *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. iii.

Popery in his district. "Bernard O'Gara," he says, "is the reputed Popish Archbishop, and there are within his diocese 75 old Mass houses, 12 friaries, 57 priests, 3 nunneries, and 32 Popish schools wherein he (Dr. Vesey) thinks grammar is taught. There are also several private chapels, and Masses are often said in private houses. There young men are often ordained, and then go into foreign countries to prosecute their studies, and come back as missionaries, whereby the number of priests is greatly increased." Similar reports were made from other dioceses. Such official reports are authentic witnesses as to the terrible fury of the storm of persecution that laid desolate the Catholic Church in every part of Ireland. Thus it is reported that in Elphin "Masses are said in huts"; in Dromore "there are two old forts here, where Masses are constantly said"; in Kilmore and Ardagh "there are 38 huts used as Mass houses, and many movable altars; in some parishes Mass is said in the fields"; in Ferns "movable altars are erected in the fields; there are 21 old and ten new Mass houses." We will return again a little later to this subject. Suffice it now to remark that in the city of Tuam it was only in private houses that Mass could be said down to the year 1783, when in the chapel lane a small chapel was built, where now stands the grand Cathedral of St. Jarlath. Towards the close of the century Dr. Phillips was archbishop. He proceeded to the Islands of Arran, to instruct the faithful there and to administer confirmation. During his stay in the islands he shared the humble fare of the shermen, whilst a bundle of rushes and seaweed was his only bed. From the hardships that he endured a severe malady ensued, which soon led him to the tomb. He made no will, but gave instructions that £20, all that he possessed, should be distributed in charity.

In the See of Achonry we meet with the Right Reverend John Hart as Catholic bishop in the year 1735. He lived for a time tranquilly with his brother at the family house of Cloonamahon. This property

had been purchased some time before, under the name of a friendly Protestant named Betteridge, who professed a great affection for Catholics. He proved, however, a false friend, and in a short time appropriated to himself the house and property thus purchased in his name. The venerable bishop, driven from his family home, found a refuge in the neighbourhood with some families, who risked all they possessed in thus sheltering him. The parishioners of Ballysodare still hold in veneration an aged ash, and tradition tells us that during the latter years of his episcopate it was under its wide-spreading branches that he used to offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There is a popular legend connected with this prelate which may perhaps be mentioned in these pages. He had a great affection for the little singing-birds, liberating them whenever he could from their cages, and otherwise giving proof of care for them in a thousand ways. On the day of his interment the little songsters requited the kindness of their benefactor, and myriads of them perched on the churchyard trees and chirruped their most plaintive tunes.

Dr. Thaddeus O'Rourke was appointed to the See of Killalla in 1707. He was the son of an Irish officer, who had been distinguished for his valour in the Italian campaign, and had fallen in the battle of Luzzara. He himself had held the post of private chaplain to Prince Eugene of Savoy; this illustrious commander, who held him in the highest esteem, presented him with a gold cross and a ring set in diamonds, and obtained a letter from the Emperor Leopold, recommending the newly-consecrated bishop to his ally the Queen of England. But those marks of imperial patronage could be of little avail to a Catholic bishop among his persecuted faithful flock. He was no sooner arrived in his diocese than the priest-hunters were on his track. He was compelled to fly from place to place, and to adopt various disguises. Under the assumed name of Fitzgerald he lay concealed for some years in Joyce country. His letters to the clergy were invariably dated

ex loco refugii nostri. One of his letters dated the 6th of June, 1714, addressed to Propaganda, gives interesting details relating to his episcopate. He was appointed to the See by brief of the 15th of March, 1707, and received episcopal consecration at the hands of the Bishop of Dromore. In his diocese there were 22 parishes, which were administered by 16 priests. "The Catholics are numerous but very poor; all the land that was attractive and fertile is occupied by the flocks of the heretics; only the bogs and mountains are left for the Catholic." He adds: "For the first three years I lived under an assumed name in my brother's house, but during the past four years I have endured many persecutions and hardships. An evil-designing man gave information to Parliament that I was exercising the episcopal office throughout various districts of the kingdom, and that I was residing with impunity in my brother's house, contrary to the Penal Laws of the realm. Therefore I was compelled to seek safety in flight, and to look for an asylum and place of refuge among strangers, and those to whom I was unknown, and my brother (now deceased) was threatened with the confiscation of his property. So far I have, through the Divine protection, escaped from the hands of the wicked. In consequence of this persecution I have been obliged to travel through several parts of the kingdom which are almost inaccessible, but thanks be to God that which was to me a source of great personal suffering became in the ways of Providence an occasion of blessing to many, and I trust of merit to myself, for I strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation several hundreds of the faithful. Nor did I on this account neglect my own flock, although I had to incur imminent risk of life and liberty. But whilst I thus comforted my flock, I had to seek a home with the poor and the peasants, and to partake of their homely oaten bread and milk." In his latter years this illustrious bishop sought an asylum with his relatives, the O'Conors of Belanagare, and it was there that he rested in peace in 1735.

In the Memoir of *The O'Connors of Connaught*, by the O'Connor Don (Dublin, 1891), it is stated that the house of Denis O'Connor at Belanagare was the rendezvous for all the persecuted Catholics of the Western Province. "His hospitable door was never shut against those in misfortune and distress. Here it was that Carolan, styled the last of the Irish bards, composed his most impassioned melodies, and that Bishop O'Rourke, who had been chaplain to Prince Eugene, hid his persecuted head, and by stealth performed the sacred rites of religion." The bishop, who was very remarkable for his literary ability, repaid the hospitality extended to him by cultivating the talents of young Charles O'Connor, son of his host, who subsequently for fifty years was regarded as one of the chief leaders of the Irish Catholics. "From this learned and accomplished prelate young O'Connor imbibed the principles and learning which guided him in after life, and rendered him one of the most distinguished of Irish scholars."

It was also in the year 1707 that Ambrose McDermott was appointed Bishop of Elphin. He was of ancient and illustrious ancestry, and had lived many years in Rome, holding important offices in the Order of St. Dominic. Every precaution was taken to conceal as far as possible his consecration and his homeward journey. Nevertheless, immediately on his arrival in London he was arrested and thrown into prison. When under examination Dr. McDermott passed off as an Italian. The interpreter, who happened to be an apostate, had known him in Rome, and at once recognized him, but having received some kindness from him in former times did not betray him. After his trial, an official of the Court informed him that the authorities were fully acquainted with all the details of his career, and that they had learned from their agents on the Continent the full particulars of his consecration and his appointment to an Irish See. He was sent back to prison, and it was only after an imprisonment of four months that, through the influence of the Venetian

Ambassador, he was liberated on condition that he would quit the kingdom within six days. He sailed at once for Holland, but as soon as an opportunity presented he again took shipping for Cork, and, travelling about under the assumed name of De Witt, and, under various disguises, ministered to his flock till his death in 1717.

- The following interesting letter of this Prelate, addressed from Antwerp to the Father-General of the Dominican Order in Rome on the 8th of November, 1708, enables us to realize in some way the manifold difficulties which beset the Irish bishops in those Penal days :—

“MOST REVEREND FATHER,—It is a matter of duty for me to make known to your Reverence my lot since I was liberated from the dungeons of London, where I suffered a great deal for a period of four months. The information which was made against me to the Secretary of State must, to all appearances, have come from Rome. On three different occasions when I was examined before the Secretary of State no witness was produced against me ; and during all the time that I was in prison Italians and Irishmen and Englishmen were sent under various pretexts to visit me, to the intent that they might identify me, but, thanks be to God, none of them recognized me. According to the iniquitous laws of that country one witness would have sufficed to convict me. Hence I infer that the informer must have forwarded letters from Rome, for they knew my name and surname, the place of my birth, my Episcopal consecration ; nothing, in a word, was wanting but to identify me. I am greatly indebted to the most excellent Cornaro, Ambassador of Venice, who interested himself to secure my liberation. I wrote to the S. Congregation of Propaganda giving an account of all that I endured, and of my present plight. I received a letter in reply full of sympathy and compassion, but no assistance was forwarded. Since my arrival in this country the Apostolic Nuncio, at the request of the Vicar-Apostolic of Bolduch, invited me to administer Confirmation throughout that diocese, which within the memory of man had not been visited by any bishop. I undertook the charitable task, and commencing on the 16th of September and ending on the 25th of October, confirmed 70,000 persons, very many among them being 70 or 80 years of age. In these Low Countries, subject to Holland, the Catholics are good, but very poor. Having completed this work, I came to live in Antwerp in a poor Irish College, where they gave me an apartment free, but I am obliged to pay for food and firing. I await here to see if Providence will give some opening that I may cross the ocean direct to Ireland. There

is in the College of Louvain a Father Lector named Colman O'Shagnissy, an excellent religious, with whom I am well acquainted. He is a man of virtue, and of noble and illustrious birth. As the post of Master of Studies will become vacant there this month, I would ask you to appoint him to that office. In London I met Father Patrick Gormly, a renowned missionary. For twenty years he has devoted himself with great fruit and with exemplary life to the missions in England. I would request you to appoint him Preacher General, thus to prove that you appreciate his toil in the vineyard of our Blessed Lord, and to encourage others to emulate his zeal."¹

In 1702 a memorial was presented to the Papal Nuncio in Paris, on behalf of Dr. Comerford, Archbishop of Cashel. He had laboured on the Irish mission for more than twenty years in a country district where the charity of the poor was his only revenue. In consequence of the rewards now offered by Government for the arrest of archbishops and bishops, he had little doubt that even this scanty means of support would soon cease, for he was the only archbishop then resident in Ireland; all the informers would be in pursuit of him, and he would have to retire to some solitary place where he might be wholly unknown. It is added in his praise that "neither chains whose rigours he had already felt, nor the fear of living an outcast and a wanderer, nor the hope of finding a place of refuge abroad, nor even the terrors of death, with which he has been often menaced, could ever induce him to desert the flock committed to his care."

His successor in the See of Cashel, Dr. Christopher Butler, was the son of Walter Butler, of Kilcash, and was thus closely allied to the noble families of Ormond and Fingall. His abode was for the most part in the Galtee mountains, not far from his old family estates. The next prelate, Dr. James Butler, lived to a great old age, and died in 1774. Towards the close of his episcopate, he was permitted to dwell undisturbed in a humble thatched cabin on the site now occupied by the archiepiscopal residence in Thurles.

¹ From the original letter in Italian, in the Archives of Propaganda, Rome.

In the Propaganda Archives, Rome, there is a letter of Dr. Cornelius O'Keeffe, Bishop of Limerick, who, on the 6th of August, 1734, writes to the S. Congregation from Paris, whither he had been compelled to fly by the violence of the persecution, that "he was in hopes to be able to return once more to his diocese, where he would live concealed so as to escape the pursuit of those in search of him, and from such place of retreat he could communicate with his clergy and through them with his flock." This letter was accompanied by a private communication addressed to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, in which he states that before quitting Ireland he had been for eighteen months pursued by the myrmidons of the Government, being accused of high treason, the only ground for such an accusation being that he had received a Bull granting certain indulgences from Rome. He had in consequence "been compelled to take refuge in France, where he was in a very sad condition, being about seventy years of age, without means and without support, being, moreover, very infirm and quite exhausted in strength, after twenty-two years of toil on the mission in Ireland, as Vicar-General or as bishop."

In the Public Record Office, Dublin, there are ten official documents which relate to the imprisonment and banishment of Dr. Sleyne, Bishop of Cork and Cloyne. As these documents abundantly prove that the exercise of spiritual authority was the only crime of which this venerable bishop was accused, whilst they at the same time throw considerable light on the whole procedure of the Government in Ireland against the Catholic clergy, it may not be out of place to refer to them somewhat in detail.

(1) The first in this series of documents is a presentment from the Grand Jury to the City and County of Cork, dated the 27th of July, 1702, complaining that John Sleyne, titular Bishop of Cork, had collated Rev. Richard Horner to the parish of Youghal and had excommunicated Dominic Gough, the priest already in that town, for not submitting to said collation; and further, that

Peter Murrough, Titular Vicar-General of the said bishop, still continued in the city, and exercised ecclesiastical jurisdiction there.

(2) Letter of Joshua Dawson, secretary at the Castle, to the Mayor of Cork, from Dublin Castle, 8th of August, 1702, conveying a warrant for the transportation to Portugal "of the Titular Bishop of Cork, and a fryar, and also one Martin, a fryar, who will be brought from Limerick."

(3) Memorial of Dr. Sleyne, addressed from prison to Count Wratislaw, Austrian Ambassador in London, and forwarded by Lord Rochester, Lord Lieutenant, from London, to the Lords Justices in Dublin, on 27th of October, 1702. This valuable paper, thus officially preserved, is of particular interest, and is as follows:—

"MOST EXCELLENT SIR,—Your petitioner, John Baptista Sleyne, Bishop of Corke and Cloyne, eighty years old, and laden with infirmities and weaknesses, having been five years kept in close prison—viz., from the year 1698—most humbly shews that lately, at a general sessions held for the Queen in the City of Corke, the petitioner was convicted before the judges because he had not departed this kingdom with other dignitaries and regulars of the Church of Rome, then perpetually banished this kingdom under the penalty of perpetual banishment, or during life. Now, by the order of the said judges, it is decreed after so long imprisonment and hardships, your petitioner shall be banished for ever (to some islands which he knows not) in this rigorous winter season, and in the time of war. Your afflicted petitioner believes that it is beside the intention and knowledge of her Majesty that such severity is put in execution, and hopes she will mercifully spare his old age and grey hairs, filled with infirmity and misery, seeing nothing now remains for him but a grave. If your Excellency, out of tender regard to God's cause and the Church, should interpose with her Majesty in this thing, and oppose this cruel sentence, it is in the power of her Majesty and her lieutenant to prefer the petitioner to spend the few days he has yet remaining in his native country, either in or out of prison; and if it should be necessary for his liberty, he would give security of the ablest men not to do anything to the prejudice of the publick. So your afflicted petitioner, lying under difficulty, most humbly prays, who will never leave off imploring the Divine goodness for the prosperity of your Excellency's soul and body."

(4) Letter of Secretary Dawson to Mr. Whiting, Mayor of Cork, from Dublin Castle, 9th of January, 170 $\frac{3}{4}$:—

“SIR,—Upon a presentment of the Grand Jury of the City of Corke for the transporting the titular Bishop of Corke, according to an Act of Parliament in that behalf, the Lords Justices signed a warrant requiring the mayor and sheriffs of Corke to cause the said titular bishop to be putt on board the first ship that should be bound from Corke to Portugall, which order I enclosed in my letter of the 8th of August last to the then Mayor of Corke, but no account having ever been sent up of the execution of that order, or any reasons being given why the said bishop was not transported, their Excellencies have commanded me to write up to you for an account of that matter, and upon receipt of your answer further directions will be sent downe to you therein ; and in the mean time no further prosecution is to be had against the said bishop, which I signify to you by their Excellencies’ commands, and am, Sir, your most humble servant, J. DAWSON.”

(5) Reply of John Whiting, Mayor of Cork, to the above, setting forth that on receipt of this letter he had communicated with his predecessor in the mayoralty, Alderman Dring, who stated that he had received the orders referred to, but could find no ship going to Portugal. As regards himself, he had met with the same difficulty, and though he had agreed with several ships to take the bishop on board, yet they all pretended to be “forced to sea unawares,” so that the bishop is still “in as bad a condition to be transported as formerly.”

(6) Letter to Lord Rochester, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (in London), from the Council in Ireland, Dublin Castle, 19th of January, 170 $\frac{3}{4}$, that the bishop’s stay in Ireland had been connived at by his late Majesty, upon the condition that he should not exercise any jurisdiction ; the Grand Jury at Cork at last sessions had made presentment to the Chief Justice Pyne complaining that he exercised jurisdiction, and that he had not been transported to Portugal ; and therefore the orders had been signed on the 8th of August last for carrying out his transportation, by putting him on board the first ship bound for Portugal.

(7) Letter to Lord Rochester, dated Cockpitt, 30th of January, 1703, to the Lords of the Council in Ireland :—

“I had the opportunity yesterday to lay before the Queen at the Cabinet Council your lordship’s letter of the 19th inst., relating to the titular Popish Bishop of Corke, and have received her Majesty’s commands to send you directions that your own order of the 8th of August last for the transferring the said Popish bishop to Portugal be put in execution. You will therefore take care accordingly, and some particular directions must be given to the Mayor of Corke to be more diligent in the observing your orders, for that by his own account to Mr. Dawson, it was taken notice of here, his reasons were very slender for not having done as he was directed.”

(8) Letter of Joshua Dawson, from Dublin Castle, 9th of February, 1703, to the Collector of Customs at Cork, to pay to the Mayor of the city the necessary amount for shipping Dr. Sleyne to Portugal.

(9) Letter of J. Dawson, on the same date, to the Mayor of Cork, conveying the letter of council “that you cause the said Popish bishop to be put on board the first ship that shall be bound from Corke to Portugal.”

(10) Letter of Rowland Davies, Dean of Ross, to Dr. Marmaduke Coghill, in Dublin, from Dawestown, 4th of October, 1703, and endorsed as referred to the “committee on the state of the nation.” He had been asked to forward to the Castle all the particulars regarding the stay of Dr. Sleyne at Cork; he had also received several complaints relative to the exercise of jurisdiction by the said titular bishop, but the bishop had been shipped for Portugal before anything could be done.

These official documents leave no doubt as to the lengthened imprisonment and banishment of this venerable prelate for the sole offence of exercising his episcopal authority.¹ He died at the Dominican Convent of Buon Successo, near Lisbon, in 1713, aged ninety years.

¹ For the subsequent history of this venerable bishop, see *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, ii. 369.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

Hardships endured by the parochial clergy. Arrest of Brian McGuirk, Dean of Armagh—His death in prison—F. Bourke preaches through various districts of Kerry and Limerick—The priest-hunter, Terrel—Rev. Phelim O'Hamill of Belfast is thrown into prison—F. Hannat of Kilclief concealed in a meal-ark—His imprisonment, exile, shipwreck—The informer's fate—Michael Plunkett, Vicar-General of Meath—How he baffled his pursuers—John Barnewall of Ardracran—Plot for his capture—Rebukes the priest-hunter Pilot—Concealed in a rick of turf—Sufferings of the clergy in Dublin—The Poor Clares—Arrest of the city priests—In 1744 several priests thrown into prison—Viscount Taaffe finds the chapel doors nailed—Mass in an upper storey in a back lane of Dublin—The house tumbles down—Places of worship at length tolerated—But without a steeple or bell—The law evaded at Baltinglass and Leighlin Bridge—An Augustinian friar in Wexford gaol—Other instances of imprisonment—Exploits of the High Sheriff of Wicklow at St. Kevin's in Glendalough—John Taaffe, Parish Priest of Carlow—Interesting details of his arrest—Probable martyrdom—F. Cunnann makes his escape with the vestment on—A Protestant magistrate befriends him—Rev. Nicholas Sheehy, P.P. of Clogheen—Some details of his trial and sufferings—Barbarous treatment of the clergy in 1798—Poverty of the clergy in the Penal times—Dr. Doyle visits F. Dowling of Stradbally.

In the present chapter we will give some instances to illustrate the hardships to which the parochial clergy were exposed under those Penal Laws. In October, 1712, when the proclamation ordering the laws against Popish priests, &c., to be put into force, was published in Armagh, Walter Dawson, a cousin of the Secretary at the Castle, received intelligence that "a Popish Dean of Armagh" was concealed in the neighbourhood of the

primatial city. He had him accordingly arrested without delay and thrown into prison. The official correspondence in the Irish Record Office gives us full details regarding this most singular case. The captive dean was the Rev. Brian McQuirk, who proved to be a bedridden old man, in his ninetieth year, weak of mind, being now in a second childhood, and so poor that he depended entirely for his support on the charity of his neighbours. The brother of the captive wrote to the Government deprecating the inhumanity of this arrest, and urging that it could not fail to bring serious discredit upon the law. A few months later Walter Dawson again addressed the authorities of the Castle, setting forth that in pursuance of the proclamation he had arrested the Popish titular Dean of Armagh, and had obtained witnesses against him, but that on the 13th of February, before the assizes had begun, his prisoner had died in Armagh gaol; he adds a prayer that notwithstanding this mischance he may not be deprived of the reward of £50 which he would have been entitled to on the Dean's conviction.

A magistrate in Listowel, whose letter of August 13, 1711, was forwarded to the Government, gives a curious picture of the earnestness with which the Catholic clergy in the south laboured to promote piety among the people. A priest, he says, named Bourke, a native of Connaught, was preaching throughout various districts of Kerry. He went barefoot, bareheaded, with a staff in his hand, and he exhorted the people as he met them on the roads, or in the fields, to forsake their vices and lead a pious life. He had a catechism, which he read and explained to them in Irish; and at the end of his discourse he used to intone the *Miserere* and scourge himself with a discipline until the blood trickled down his back. The magistrate hearing that he was followed by multitudes, and was reputed by the people a worker of miracles, sent to arrest him. He escaped, however, and was now continuing the same course in Limerick, where at times as many as 2,000 or 3,000

persons assembled to receive his instructions. The magistrate adds that, as far as he was able to learn, this priest had no object in view except the promotion of piety.¹

One of the most active of the priest-hunters was known by the name of Edward Terrel. In the year 1712, upon his information, two priests, named Patrick McCarthy and William Hennessey, were arrested at Cork, thrown into prison, convicted, and transported. In October the same year he presented a petition to the Castle, setting forth his own zeal for the gospel, and complaining of the remissness of the magistrates. Next month he accompanied the magistrates of Ferbane in search of priests through a very wild country to the house of Mr. John Coghlan, "in a most retired place, far distant from any high road"; they found plenty of books, but the priests had fled. Early in 1713 this unfortunate man's career was brought to a premature close. The Dublin newspapers of the 23rd of May, 1713, announced that "This day, Terrel, the famous priest-catcher, who was condemned this term for having several wives, was executed."

Among the official letters preserved at the Public Record Office, Dublin, there is one addressed by George Macartney, the Sovereign of Belfast, to the Secretary at the Castle, dated from Belfast, March 24, 1707, and giving some interesting details relative to Rev. Phelim O'Hamill, who was the registered priest for the extensive districts of Belfast, Derryaghy, and Drum. This priest had been ordained in 1677 by the martyred Primate Oliver Plunkett, and was now in his eightieth year. A proclamation had been issued for his arrest, and as he was not conscious of any crime he wrote at once to the magistrate, stating that he was laid up with sickness, but was quite willing to put himself in the magistrate's hands, and would do so as soon as he was able to proceed to Belfast; "accordingly, he came on Monday

¹ Letter of J. Julian to the Right Hon. the Lord of Kerry, in Irish Record Office.

last," writes Mr. Macartney, "and as I was then at Antrim upon the commission of array for the militia, he stayed in this town till I came home, and hath this day surrendered himself to me. I have put him into our town gaol, and desire you would communicate this account to their Excellencies (the Lords Justices), where I intend to keep him till I know their further pleasure." He then adds that the behaviour of P. O'Hamill had been so exemplary since the revolution, and he had during the disturbances shown such kindness to the Protestants, protecting their property from injury, that the leading Protestants of the country had come forward to offer bail and to solicit his release. "However," Mr. Macartney continues, "the proclamation being positive, and no discretionary power left in us, I would not bail him. Thank God, we are not under any great fears here; for upon this occasion I have made the constable return me a list of all the inhabitants within the town, and we have not amongst us within the town above seven Papists; and by the return made by the High Constable, there is not above one hundred and fifty Papists in the whole barony. Favour me with an answer to this, with the Government's pleasure therein." This important letter bears the significant endorsement, conveying the substance of the Lord Justices' reply, "Let him continue for the present where he is."¹

A few years later the Rev. James Hannat, P.P. of Kilclief, was arrested, thrown into prison, and, after two years' imprisonment, sentenced to transportation. This worthy priest had made for himself, in Ballynally, a place of concealment from the priest-hunters, but on one occasion, being closely pursued, he took refuge with a Protestant family of Kilclief, named Stockdale, who concealed him in their barn in a meal-ark. Tradition says that that barn was ever after blessed, and even its thatch was never harmed by the greatest storm. The

¹ Public Record Office, Dublin. The letter has been published in full in Bennet's *History of Belfast* (1877), p. 416.

following letters, addressed to the Secretary at the Castle, preserve authentic details of his imprisonment:—

“DOWNE, *Feb. 21, 1713.*

“SIR,—I formerly gave you an account of that I sent to search for one James Hannat, a priest, whom I had reason to believe exercises ecclesiastical jurisdiction in this diocese, and the most dangerous man in all the country. I am now to acquaint you that he is taken; and Major Norris and I have sent him to this gaol with our mittimus. The major and I are desirous to know the sentiment of the Government how we are to have ourselves on this occasion; and if it be bailable what bail we are to take. I must tell you that the Papists in this country are very much alarmed and disturbed at his being taken, and so exasperated at the man who took him, that I have been obliged to give him arms to defend his house from their insults. The sub-sheriff has been with me since the priest's confinement, and told me that he had clapped a new arrest upon him for marrying a couple of our Church clandestinely, which crime I leave to the Government to consider whether it be bailable. I wait your directions, and am, &c.

“HENRY MAXWELL.”

“DOWNPATRICK, *Nov. 3, 1714.*

“SIR,—Yours I received of the 23rd of October. There is none in the gaols of the county of Down under sentence of transportation, but one James Hannat, a Popish priest; he has lain in gaol about fourteen months, and has been about half-a-year of that time under sentence of transportation. George Lambert, Esq., one of the Justices of the Peace for the said county, and I have used our endeavours to have him put off, and have had him several times at Portaferry, but could get no ship that would receive him. We shall use our utmost endeavours to get him transported as soon as possibly we can, &c.

“ROBERT JONES, High Sheriff.”

Father Hannat was in due time transported, but the vessel was shipwrecked on the Antrim coast, and he made his way back to labour with renewed zeal among his people. He held in after years the dignity of Arch-deacon of Down. The informer who betrayed him was hated by every one. The wild justice of revenge even followed him after death, and his body would not be allowed to rest in any of the churchyards of Lecale.¹

¹ Lavery, *Diocese of Down and Connor*, ii. appendix xlviii.

The Rev. Michael Plunkett, at the beginning of the century, was P.P. of Ratoath, and Vicar-General of the diocese of Meath. He had been for a time Secretary to the Most Rev. Primate Oliver Plunkett, and had spent many years in Rome. Being connected with some of the chief families in Meath, and being besides a man of solid piety and learning, several of the Protestant gentry sought, but in vain, to secure for him some toleration in the exercise of his sacred ministry. The chapel of Ratoath, where he officiated, was a wretched mud-wall thatched cabin, surrounded by other houses which screened it from public view. Even there, however, he was not secure, and whenever the agents of persecution visited the neighbourhood, that poor chapel would be closed and the pastor would seek concealment in retired parts of the country. There was a priest-hunter named Thompson who singled out this zealous pastor, anticipating a rich reward for his arrest. Father Plunkett, however, was effectively concealed in the house of a Protestant magistrate. A room on the second storey was set aside for his use, with bed and fuel and provisions of every sort. The room was constantly kept locked, and it being supposed to be haunted, the servants never cared to enter it. Whenever Thompson applied for a warrant, this gentleman gave the priest timely information, and then he came at night with his servant, and drawing forth the ladder, which was left at hand for the purpose, he entered the room prepared for him. While the storm lasted he remained there during the day, and if there were any sick to be attended, or any sacraments to be administered, the servant would apply the ladder at night, give the signal, and the pastor would descend, attend his people, and return before the break of day. In 1727, aged 75 years, he passed to his reward. His resting-place at the east end of the old church of Killeghland is still held in reverence by the parishioners, and after the lapse of a century and a half, his memory is still cherished among the faithful as if they, and no their forefathers, had laid him in the tomb.

The memory of the Rev. John Barnewall, P.P. of Ardraccan, is also held in benediction. He was a near relative of Lord Trimbleston, and his zeal and holiness added new lustre to the nobility which he inherited by birth. In the district which he attended there were two thatched mud-wall chapels in which he officiated ; one at Neilstown, and the other in the valley beneath the old church of Rathboyne. It was only, however, during the lull of the storm that these could be used for the Holy Sacrifice ; and while the tempest of persecution raged, Mass had to be celebrated on the hills, or other hiding-places ; and during the preceding week, word would be whispered round among the people where they would meet the priest on the following Sunday. On one occasion, a set of miscreants, anxious to secure the blood-money which was offered for the seizure of a priest, laid a plan for his capture. They met together in a Protestant house, and set an unsuspecting messenger to call Father Barnewall to administer the last rites to a dying man. The messenger soon learned from the people where the priest could be found, and Father Barnewall hastened to discharge his duty. In the meantime many were the gibes uttered by the priest-catchers, and great was their rejoicing in the anticipation of their rich reward. A poor Catholic servant girl overheard them in their revelry, and contrived to meet Father Barnewall before he reached the house, and warned him of his danger.

On another occasion, he met face to face a notorious priest-hunter, named Pilot, but ingeniously eluded his questioning, and made his escape. He was clad in frieze, and had his blackthorn stick in his hand, and as he was proceeding to say Mass near Allenstown he carried his vestments in a small wallet across his shoulders. The priest-hunter was standing on the road speaking to a Protestant, who knew Father Barnewall well, but on this occasion pretended to be a stranger to him. When Father Barnewall came up, the priest-hunter, half suspecting his disguise, said, "Good morning, sir." "Good morning," was answered. "My name is Pilot ; what is

yours?" "Your name (Pilate), sir, bodes no good to a Christian," was Father Barnewall's reply. His friend now interposed, saying, "Let him pass, let him pass," implying that if it came to blows the stranger was more than a match for his interrogator, and Father Barnewall safely pursued his way.

He had several other hairbreadth escapes, and it seemed almost a miracle that he was so long preserved to minister to his devoted parishioners. On one occasion he was so closely pursued that to ensure his safety a farmer had to build up a rick of turf around him. The martyr's crown, however, was to reward his life-long labour. He was now beyond eighty years old, and was in the discharge of his sacred ministry, when the agents of persecution seized him and led him off in triumph to Navan gaol. Thence, after a few days, he was sent a prisoner to Dublin, and he never more returned to his faithful, sorrowing people. Tradition says he was sentenced to transportation, but the ship being wrecked on the English coast, the mob who laid hold of him treated him with such indignity that he expired in their hands.¹

In Dublin, the clergy were repeatedly thrown into prison, and subjected to the greatest privations. In January, 1712, the Lord Chancellor addressed the Mayor and Aldermen of the city, urging upon them the duty of "preventing public Mass being said, contrary to law," and lamenting that the negligence of the corporation, for the past, had produced great disorder throughout the kingdom. Before the close of that year a few Poor Clares from Galway came to Dublin, at the request of the archbishop. They had scarcely arrived, when the agents of the Government surrounded the house, and obliged them to seek a shelter in the private houses of some friends. A proclamation was also issued for the arrest of Rev. John Burke (Provincial of the Franciscans), the archbishop, Most Rev. Dr. Byrne, and Rev.

¹ For full details regarding this illustrious Confessor of the Faith, see Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, ii. 263.

Dr. Nary, who were supposed to have been instrumental in introducing this community into the capital.

A few years later a swoop was made by the priest-hunters, and all the priests of the city of Dublin were thrown into prison. Again, in 1744, on a Saturday morning in February, an alderman, named Aldrich, proceeded to St. Paul's Chapel a little after ten o'clock; and finding a priest named Nicholas English in the act of saying Mass, he arrested him, allowing him time only to take off the sacred vestments, and sent him off to prison. The alderman then proceeded to the chapel of the Dominicans, and sent to prison two of the fathers, whom he found there. The other priests at once changed their residence, except an aged Franciscan, named Michael Lynch, and he, too, was seized before evening and thrown into the same dungeon. De Burgo (*Hibernia Domin.* 175, 717), who has recorded this fact, adds that he was himself attached to St. Paul's Chapel, and had said Mass there at nine o'clock on that morning, and it was only a few days previous that he had changed the hour for saying Mass with Father English. When Lord Viscount Taaffe was sent as ambassador from Vienna to London, he made an excursion to the land of his fathers. Being in Dublin on a Sunday, he went to Stephen Street Chapel to hear Mass, but found the doors nailed up by order of the Government. The doors of all the other chapels were nailed up in the same way. He wrote to the king, complaining of these vexatious proceedings.

Soon after a terrible event aroused public attention to the sad consequences of such oppressive legislation. It was only in the stables of the back lanes, or in the garrets of ruinous houses, that the people could assemble to hear Mass. On a Sunday morning, in 1745, a number of people were assisting at Mass in an upper storey in one of the lanes of Dublin; Father Fitzgerald, a native of Meath, was the celebrant, and just as he had given the last blessing at the close of Mass, the house tumbled down. The priest and nine others were killed on the

spot, while several others subsequently died of the wounds which they received. An order from the Viceroy and Privy Council was soon afterwards published, permitting chapels to be opened in the city in retired places for the use of Catholics. Even when some toleration was extended to Catholic places of worship, the Government most strictly insisted that no bells should be used and no belfries be attached to the chapels, and as late as 1793, though the Penal Laws were then partially relaxed, this enactment concerning the belfries continued to be enforced. The law of 21st and 22nd of George III., ch. 24, sect. 6, was till far into the present century insisted on, that "no chapel can have a steeple or bell, no funeral can take place in any church or chapel-yard, and no rites or ceremonies, &c., are permitted to the Catholic clergy, except within their several places of worship or in private houses." To evade this belfry law, a square bell-tower was erected in Baltinglass, in the cemetery, which was separated by a field from the Catholic church. At Leighlin Bridge a small tower, built in those days, still remains. It was constructed close by the Catholic church, but not connected with it.

Throughout the whole province of Leinster the laws against the clergy were according to the whims or the bigotry of the local magistrates rigorously enforced, and the sufferings of the priests from year to year are duly registered in the official papers of the Public Record Office. Thus in 1723 there is a letter of Carteret, the Lord Lieutenant, from London, addressed to the Lords Justices in Ireland, setting forth that an Augustinian friar, named Comin, "was lying for some months in Wexford gaol," and that he was under sentence of transportation; and suggesting that since the Spanish Ambassador had made intercession for him he might be permitted to transport himself to Spain. From Kilkenny, Oliver Cramer, on October 25, 1714, writes to Dublin Castle that one Martin Archer, a Popish priest, had been convicted of officiating without taking the oath of

abjuration, and had been duly forwarded to Waterford for transportation. From Kildare, the Lords Justices received intelligence on January 12, 1714, that several writs "against priests and schoolmasters" had been issued in the preceding year, but in vain, for all the culprits had fled, except a priest, named James Eustace, who had now been lying for several months in gaol, and who, whilst awaiting the order for transportation, was kept "in close confinement." So, too, in the County of Wicklow, in the summer of 1714, a priest, named McTee, was convicted of saying Mass, and sentenced to transportation. On June 4, 1714, the high sheriff of Wicklow gives an animated description of his labours on the preceding day to suppress the devotions of the Papists at the shrine of St. Kevin, in Glendalough. He had received intelligence that an assemblage of pious pilgrims was to be held at the seven churches there, and that persons from all parts of the kingdom would take part in the "riotous assembly." An armed body was accordingly got together, and several magistrates, accompanied by a great number of Protestants, rode all night, and met at the seven churches at four o'clock in the morning of the 3rd of June, the Saint's feast. "On the approach of our forces the rioters immediately dispersed. We pulled down their tents, threw down and demolished their superstitious crosses, filled up and destroyed their wells, and apprehended and committed one Toole, a Popish schoolmaster." Such was the glorious achievement of their martial cavalcade. The high sheriff adds: "The Protestant inhabitants of this country are unanimous in their inclinations and resolutions, and will exert themselves with all diligence and zeal for his Majesty's service in putting all the laws in every respect strictly in force against the Papists."¹

Towards the middle of the century the Rev. John Taaffe was Parish Priest of Carlow. Dr. Comerford, in his excellent History of the Dioceses of Kildare and

¹ Letter of Thomas Ryves to the Lords Justices, June 4, 1714; Lecky, *History of England*, ii. 274.

Leighlin (iii. 53), publishes from the Irish Record Office the following letter from the Sheriff of Carlow to the Chief Secretary :—

“SIR—I received yours of the 3rd inst., and in obedience to his Grace the Lord Lieutenant and Council’s commands, have made it my whole business ever since to search and inquire whether there were any Archbishops, Vicars-General, Deans, Jesuits, monks, friars, or any other Regular Popish Clergy or any other Papists exercising any Ecclesiastical jurisdiction in or about this town and heard there was one John Taaf who had a house in this town and parish priest of the same and constantly exercised Ecclesiastical jurisdiction here, and upon writ of yours went in search of him in order to apprehend and commit him, but he had made his escape out of this town and country, but where I can’t find, and I know of no other person exercising Ecclesiastical jurisdiction here, but if any such should dare to come within my jurisdiction, I will immediately apprehend them and give an account to my Lord Lieutenant and Council of the same, and am, Sir,

“Your most obedient, humble servant,

“PHILIP BERNARD.

“CARLOW, *March 1, 1743.*”

A letter written nine years later from Ireland to the Internuncio in Brussels, and by him forwarded to Rome, gives some further details regarding this devoted priest. I translate it from the original Latin text :—

“On the 4th of last month (December 1751) Mr. Taafe, Parish Priest of Carlow, meeting by chance on the public road the Deputy-Lieutenant of the County, was at once arrested by him and thrown into gaol. The Protestants themselves were indignant at this treatment, and he would undoubtedly have been soon set at liberty were it not for the rioting that took place. As soon as the faithful people heard that their parish priest, for whom they deservedly cherished the deepest veneration, had been imprisoned, they assembled tumultuously and assailed the Deputy-Lieutenant with sticks and mud and stones, and with all sorts of abuse, and were it not that he rushed from their hands into a house that was near, much worse would have befallen him. As he thus had saved himself from them they vented their fury on his

horses, cutting off their ears and maiming the poor animals in a terrible way. The Supreme Council of the Kingdom was indignant at the outrage thus offered to their Deputy, and it is to be feared that, if the rioters escape, the outrage shall be avenged on the parish priest, though he is quite innocent in the matter. I say he is innocent; for as soon as he was arrested he besought the Deputy-Lieutenant, in order to prevent any tumult, to lay aside his arms, promising that he would peaceably follow at a distance, and pledging his word that he would go to prison; all which he faithfully carried out."

Of the subsequent fate of this worthy priest there is no record. He must have met with his death within a few weeks after the date of the above letter, for his successor as parish priest of Carlow was appointed about that time. A large tree on the roadside as you proceed from Carlow towards Arless is pointed out, and tradition says that a priest whose name is not preserved was hanged by a magistrate and the military from its branches. It is not improbable that Father Taaffe was the pastor who thus attained the martyr's crown.

A priest-catcher named Harrison was particularly active in the west of Ireland. A friar named Father Cunnan was officiating in the open fields, in the neighbourhood of Doocastle, when the congregation was set upon by this Harrison and his band. There being no time to take off the sacred vestments, the poor friar struck off, habited as he was, to Cloonmore, to the house of a Protestant magistrate who had often befriended him. The magistrate, seeing that there was no time to be lost, told him to hide as best he could, and snatching the vestment put it on himself, and pretending to be himself the runaway, started off by the back door over hedges and fields, the priest-hunters being quickly in pursuit. At length they overtook him, and brought him to town before the resident magistrate, who laughed heartily at finding the prisoner none other than his brother magistrate, who explained the matter

by saying, "He wished to see how these fellows were able to run."

Father Nicholas Sheehy, P.P. of Clogheen, in the diocese of Waterford, was led to the scaffold at Clonmel, in 1766, under the accusation, indeed, of various crimes, but in reality through hatred of the Catholic Church, of which he was a devoted minister. He had some time before been arrested and indicted for saying Mass and exercising the other duties of a priest, but for want of sufficient evidence had been acquitted. He was now accused of high treason, and a reward of £300 was offered by the Government for his arrest. Conscious of innocence, he addressed a letter to the Government offering to place himself in their hands for trial on such a charge, on condition that his trial should not take place in Clonmel, where his enemies had sworn to take away his life, but in the Court of King's Bench, Dublin. This condition was accepted, and he was accordingly tried in Dublin, and honourably acquitted, the witnesses who were produced against him being persons of no credit, whose testimony no jury could receive. He was no sooner declared "Not guilty" than his enemies had him arrested on a new accusation. An informer named Bridges had disappeared, and was supposed to have been murdered, and Father Sheehy was now accused of having murdered him. It is difficult to free the Government from complicity with his accusers when they permitted this case to be sent for trial to Clonmel. There were none to accuse him but the same infamous witnesses whose testimony had been discredited in the King's Bench. Moreover, on the night of the supposed murder, Father Sheehy had been far away from the place assigned for the crime, with Mr. Keating, a gentleman of property and unimpeached integrity. This gentleman no sooner appeared in court to attest this fact, than a Protestant minister named Hewetson stood up, and accused him of a murder which had taken place in Newmarket. Mr. Keating was himself immediately arrested and hurried off to Kilkenny gaol. In due course he was tried and

acquitted, there not being a shadow of evidence against him ; but the enemies of Father Sheehy had gained their purpose, for in the meantime sentence had been passed against him, and he had suffered the last penalties of the law. By many Protestants of his own district Father Sheehy was held in the greatest esteem. His last place of refuge was in the house of a Protestant farmer named Griffiths, whose house adjoined the churchyard of Shandrahan, where Father Sheehy's remains now repose. During the daytime Father Sheehy used to lie concealed in a vault of the churchyard, and at night he entered the house, where a large fire had to be kindled, so benumbed was he from the hardships of what might be justly styled his living tomb.¹

In 1798 some few priests took part with the insurgents, and paid with their lives the penalty of their offence. The hatred, however, of the Orange officers and men was directed against every priest. The illustrious Archbishop Murray was at that time curate in the town of Arklow. As he was one day passing through the streets to attend a sick-call, he overheard an officer telling his men to shoot the Popish priest, and it was only by turning instantly into a shop, and passing out at the rear, that he escaped death. He knew too well that these were no idle threats. A little while before, his saintly parish priest had been murdered by them in his bed, at the age of seventy-eight years. On another occasion, when saying Mass in his own mud-chapel, a body of troops, with artillery, were ordered to fire on the assembled congregation, but the terrified people fled in all directions, leaving the celebrant alone at the altar. The Bishop of Ferns, writing to Archbishop Troy on June 24, 1799, states that one of his worthy parish priests, named Father Frank Kavanagh, had been treated most cruelly by a body of the Gorey yeomen. They came to his house and demanded drink and meat.

¹ For the terrible judgements that befel those who encompassed F. Sheehy's death, see R. R. Madden's *United Irishmen*, vol. i. p. 84.

When they had satiated themselves, they drew their swords, and abused him in the most contumelious language, declaring that they would cut off the head of "the old croppy rebel scoundrel." Father Kavanagh made his escape, but they wreaked their vengeance on the curate and servants, on whom they inflicted severe wounds. This fury of the Orange yeomen was not confined to the living. It extended itself to the lifeless remains of the priests who were executed.

From another letter of the Bishop of Ferns to the Archbishop of Dublin, on September 2, 1798, I learn that when the Rev. Philip Roche was hanged in Wexford, after death his body was thrown into the river; and the Rev. John Murphy was whipped, then hanged, and after death his head was cut off, and his body was set in a tar barrel and publicly burnt in Tullow.

All through the dismal period of persecution, the Catholic clergy were not only exposed to the penal enactments of the laws, but they had further to endure all the privations and hardships consequent on the deepest poverty, and in this, too, it was their only ambition to partake of the bread of humiliation with their oppressed and impoverished flock. This extreme poverty extended far into our own times. In the funeral discourse on the late venerable Dean Kenny, of Killaloe, whose labours in the sacred ministry extended over a period of sixty-five years, I read the following words:—"When Father Kenny was ordained, in 1814, there were few churches which were not the merest hovels, there were wide tracks of country without a church at all, and, with the exception of a few main lines of road, the country was traversed by the roughest bridle-paths. There were men living until within the last few years—there may be those still—who had seen the venerable priest, whom we have only known in positions of dignity, attending his sacred duties barefooted in his first curacy of Kilmihill."¹

¹ *Panegyric of the Very Rev. John Kenny, Dean of Killaloe*, by the Rev. John Egan (1879), p. 10.

We may take another instance from the sketch which the illustrious Bishop of Kildare, Dr. Doyle, has given of Father Dowling, who was Vicar-General of the diocese, and for more than fifty years P.P. of Stradbally. He attended sick-calls in a cart without springs, his only cushion being a sheaf of straw. His habitation bore on it the same impress of poverty. When Dr. Doyle held his first visitation in Stradbally in 1819, this aged pastor was still living. The bishop arrived in the town late in the evening, and asked to be shown the residence of the parish priest. He was led to a tottering old house, little better than a ruin, in a remote room of which he found the venerable priest reading his office by the light of a solitary taper. "Time was when the earthen floor was daily worn by his wasted knees; but infirmities now bound him to a chair of unplanned wood. Dr. Doyle, with much humility, remained standing until Father Dowling had finished his office. He described himself as awe-stricken in presence of the saintly priest. At last the following dialogue ensued:—'I heard some one enter; what may be their will?' 'A young man to ask your blessing, Father.' . . . 'My blessing is not worth much, if not worth while to give your name, but such as it is you have it freely.' It was a touching spectacle to witness the emotion of the old priest in the explanations that followed, and the agony into which he was thrown at finding himself unable to vacate the only chair his cell possessed, and offer it to his bishop. He raised his withered hands to heaven, and fervently thanked heaven that he had lived to see Dr. Doyle."

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

The city of Galway a rendezvous for the clergy under sentence of banishment—F. Fleming, O.S.D.—Special bye-laws against Catholics—F. Neal Boyle and other priests arrested—No Protestants to make a jury—The Galway Jury Act—Lecky's description of the results of the Penal Laws in Galway—Governor Eyre describes the Corporation—His measures against the Catholics—He laments the decay of Protestantism—Number of Protestants in 1770—The priest enrolled as a servant the better to conceal his sacred character—Mr. O'Connor's house at Sylane—Mass said in a sandpit—Rev. Dr. Sweeney in Cork gaol—Singular petition of a Government agent—Special laws against the Catholics in Limerick—Unpleasant results—Difficulty of arresting priests in Kerry and Leitrim—The borough of Bandon and its bye-laws—Where Mass was celebrated—Some particulars regarding Mountrath—The military at Tullow in 1798—Unconquerable attachments of the Irish people to the Faith—Attested by the Protestant Bishop of Cork—All places of Catholic worship prohibited—Reports of Protestant bishops—the Holy Sacrifice was not interrupted—Statement of Dr. Patrick McGettigan, Bishop of Raphoe.

WE have endeavoured in the foregoing chapters to glean from the contemporary records some individual instances to illustrate at the same time the severity of the persecution which raged against the Faith throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, and the heroism of religious devotedness on the part of the Irish clergy and laity which has never been surpassed. We may now turn our attention to the results of the Penal Laws in particular districts, and we will consider in a special manner the action of those laws on the celebration of the Divine

Mysteries, the better to realize how fierce was the storm that laid desolate the sanctuaries of Ireland's piety, and how far-reaching were the efforts of the persecutors in those days to crush out all that was best and noblest in the social, no less than in the religious, life of her Catholic people.

Throughout a great part of the last century the city of Galway was the most important civil and religious centre for the west of Ireland, and it was at the same time the chief port for communication with the various countries of the Continent. When the decree of banishment was published against the Catholic clergy towards the close of the seventeenth century, priests and religious from all parts of Connaught and Ulster were sent thither to await vessels to carry them into exile. An official record tells us that in 1699 there were no fewer than one hundred and forty priests thus assembled within its walls under sentence of banishment. By a sort of mockery those venerable men, many of them bent with the burden of years, were obliged each day to proceed to the beach and to enter the sea up to their knees, as if to give practical proof of their eagerness to obey the order which had been issued, and to quit as soon as possible the land of their birth.

Many of the clergy thus sent into exile to the Low Countries, or France, or Spain, returned stealthily after a few months, and under various disguises braved the perils that awaited them that they might preserve the Faith among their flocks. We read of one of them, Father Walter Fleming, a Dominican, who, though advanced in years, took shipping in France for Cork early in 1700. The Government spies, however, had given information of his movements, and before he landed from the ship he was arrested, and from the ship he was led to the city prison, where he was kept for nearly a year in iron fetters. Being quite worn out with age and sickness, he was after some months shipped again for France, and landing at Nantes, died there there in 1701.

By a bye-law of the city of Galway, it was enacted in 1703 that no Catholic could purchase a house or tenement within the walls. Moreover, the Catholics already resident in the city were obliged to find Protestant sureties for good behaviour, and no Catholics were to be allowed to come to live there in future, with the exception of seamen or fishermen, and labourers whose rent did not exceed forty shillings a year. It was also decreed that no Catholic could enjoy the privilege of a freeman of the city. Catholics, moreover, could sell their goods only on market days, and even then a special tax was imposed on them. In 1708, another bye-law ordered the banishment of all Papists from the city, and the imprisonment of all the priests, and by special order some of the priests then arrested were, to deter others, publicly whipped. For this service, the Secretary at the Castle wrote to the Mayor thanking him for the zeal he had displayed, and expressing the hope that "he would continue his endeavours to banish the priests out of the town, and cause those he had apprehended to be prosecuted at law with the utmost rigour." In September, 1712, a magistrate writes from Milford, in the County of Galway, that with great difficulty he had arrested and committed to Galway gaol, Father Neal Boyle: "Great numbers," he adds, "of the Irish, from all parts of the country, flocked to see him, and would even fain have bailed him." Some even offered as much as £1,000 security for him. "I can make nothing of this matter of the priests (thus wrote another magistrate); they still abscond and keep out of the way, notwithstanding our utmost endeavours to bring them in." In 1714, the Mayor of Galway reports that two priests named Alexander Lynch and Thomas M'Dermot Roe had been convicted and duly transported. A few months later there was another prisoner to be disposed of—this was the Rev. James French. He had been transported as a priest some years before, but having returned to his flock he was once more arrested and had "lain a long time in gaol, being committed for high treason." The

Mayor adds the significant reason for the delay in not bringing him to trial for high treason: "He could not hitherto be tried here for want of a Protestant jury of freeholders, who are thin in the place."

To remedy in some way this too glaring defect in the matter of penal legislation, an Act of Parliament was passed in 1717, called the Galway Act, by which the vilest rabble of every country, no matter to what Protestant sect they might belong, were invited to become citizens, provided only that they took the oaths against the Catholic religion. As a result of the influx of such citizens, the town sank rapidly into decay. Mr. Lecky thus describes its condition a few years later: "Enterprise in every form had died out; the corporation, being narrowed to the utmost in order to keep the control of the city in the hands of a few Protestants, became even more corrupt than others in Ireland. The whole aspect of the town became one of ruin and desolation. About the middle of the century the fortifications were entirely out of repair, the gates were falling from their hinges, the main wall of the city was full of holes made by smugglers for the convenience of their trade."¹

Governor Eyre, who commanded the garrison in Galway for several years during the middle of the century, reported to the Government that the Corporation were a penniless set, who lived on the corporate revenues, and mortgaged every year the tolls and customs. "The Mayor," he writes, "is the son of a man who was my Lord Tirawly's footman; one sheriff is a beggar, the other a shoemaker, and a poor one; Alderman Ellis is a broken dragoon; and the deputy-recorder is a poor antiquated man of seventy, who is supported by the Papists." Such were the fruits of the penal enactments in Galway in 1750.

Governor Eyre, from whose letters we have been citing, never failed to adopt the most stringent measures

¹ Lecky, *History*, ii. 342.

against the Catholics. He availed himself of the martial law, which had been proclaimed, to close the city gates at an early hour in the afternoon and to keep them closed till 10 o'clock each morning. He hoped thus to prevent the people from going to Mass, which was generally celebrated at early dawn outside the walls. The Protestant Corporation, however, forwarded a complaint to the Government that by such a stringent regulation the trade of the town had been brought to utter ruin, and by order from the Castle the restriction was at once removed. The Governor avowed that he was sorely afflicted at the decay of Protestantism, the more so, he said, in that, owing to the zeal of the Catholic clergy, "several old Protestants, and the children of such, had been perverted to the Popish religion." So also a Protestant Grammar School, which in his younger days was flourishing and well attended, had come to an end for want of pupils; and now, to his horror, a gorgeous Mass-house was being erected where the school had stood. He added, writing to the Secretary of the Castle: "From the fulness of my soul I acquaint you with this; I grieve to see the decline of the few poor Protestants that are here, or rather fear an entire extermination of them." Notwithstanding all his zeal, however, Protestantism continued to decay. About the year 1770 the population of the city of Galway was estimated at 14,000, and notwithstanding the favour and patronage which had been extended to Protestantism for two hundred years the number of Protestants did not exceed 350.

One of the arts of which the clergy, particularly in the west, availed themselves, the better to conceal their sacred character, was to be enrolled among the servants of some of the leading Catholic families. The case is recorded of Mr. O'Connor, who resided at Sylane, a few miles from Tuam, that whilst standing one day on his lawn, in company with some Protestant gentlemen visitors, a poor way-worn man, in the garb of a servant, approached, and gave him a letter of introduction. Mr.

O'Connor knew well the source from which the letter came; it was from a Catholic bishop, and the stranger in the humble costume who presented it was a Catholic priest. Mr. O'Connor at once engaged him as a servant, taking some of the Protestant gentlemen present as witnesses of the hiring for his own security, and so the poor wayfarer entered the house, and, for many years, continued to appear as a servant occasionally.

In a rich old pasture field of the demesne, about a hundred yards in the rear of the dwelling-house, there is a hollow which was originally a sandpit, but which from time immemorial has been known by the significant name of *Closh-an-Afren*, that is to say, the Sandpit of the Sacrifice. On the mornings of Sundays and holidays, the faithful gathered along the brow of the old sandpit; Mass was celebrated by some unknown clergyman, whose face was concealed from view; and every one felt that it was a matter of duty, not to say of personal interest, to make no inquiries as to whence he came or whither he went. It was well known by all the parishioners that if they required a priest to assist the dying, or otherwise to administer the sacraments, it would suffice to leave word to that effect in the hall at Sylane.

In 1712 there was a priest in Cork gaol, of the name of Donagh Sweeney, a Doctor of the Sorbonne, who in 1704 had been registered P.P. of Macroom. Captain Hedges writes to the Secretary of the Castle: "I had him to Cork, in my Lord Warton's time, when at an assizes he refused to take the oath, and was bailed in court by the judges, as many others were. Whether he be a dignitary, or it be on account of his being a doctor, the other priests used to pay him reverence, and about half a year ago, after the death of a priest about eight miles from hence, he sent, as I am informed, a young fellow as curate of the parish, who on my making search for him, fled out of the kingdom, and was drowned on his passage." Dr. Sweeney had been most peaceable in his demeanour, and had lived on the best terms with all

the people in Macroom, and requested Captain Hedges to solicit permission from the Government that he might be let out on bail. The Captain, however, naïvely adds : "Being old, feeble, and poor, he fears he shall soon die in gaol, if he be retained there ; and, if he come out, he will say Mass, so that I mean not to make any request for him."¹ How truly grand is the heroism displayed by this venerable priest ! He was broken down by age and infirmities, and the hardships of imprisonment, yet he did not forego his right to discharge his spiritual duties, and for these, and these alone, his imprisonment was prolonged. A few years later another letter informs the Government that a priest who had for many years officiated in Kinsale, "is now in the gaol of Cork, under conviction, and has lain there for some months afflicted with sickness."² In the year 1716, a singular petition was presented to the Crown. An agent of the Government named Porter writes from the county of Cork, soliciting a pension on the ground of "his diligence and care in prosecuting many of the regular and secular Popish clergy who have presumed to come from foreign nations into several parts of the kingdom, particularly those who have been sheltered in the county of Cork." As an instance of his industry, he mentions that in the preceding August he had "apprehended, at the peril of his life, and brought to justice two Popish priests, for saying Mass, not registered, who obstinately refused to take the oaths, as likewise Owen McCarthy, a schoolmaster, who taught a school contrary to law, all of whom were convicted before Chief Justice Foster. There is no record as to whether his petition was granted or refused. Certain it is, however, that he did not lay aside the lucrative persecution of the clergy in which he was engaged, for two years later there is another paper from him requesting that the usual reward be forwarded to him for the conviction of

¹ Irish Record Office. Letter to J. Dawson, Oct. 16, 1712.

² Irish Record Office. Chudleigh to the Castle, Jan. 31, 1715-16.

another priest named Brady, who, having been already transported from the kingdom for the crime "of being a Popish Friar," had returned in defiance of the law. On this account, in addition to the sum promised by the Government, he hoped to receive also the amount promised by the Grand Jury of the County Clare, who had presented this poor religious as guilty of high treason, and had offered a reward to any one who would bring him to condign punishment.

For Limerick, as for Galway, a special Act of Parliament had provided that no Catholic should be allowed to settle there except seamen and fishermen, or the lowest class of labourers. In October, 1714, the Sheriff reports to the Government that one priest had been found guilty of saying Mass, and had been in gaol since the assizes of the previous year. Towards the middle of the century, owing to the many religious restrictions and the various disabilities to which the Catholics were subjected, the city was reduced to the greatest misery. In 1750 there were only four gentlemen's carriages to be found in Limerick or its neighbourhood; and three of these belonged to the Protestant bishop, or other Protestant clergymen. From Kerry a magistrate writes to the Government complaining that his district being "wild, mountainous, and purely Popish," many priests live there with impunity, and, although magistrates signed warrants for their arrest, yet it was found impossible to execute them. A like complaint was made from Leitrim, where no less than "thirty-one priests and three Popish schoolmasters" were presented by the Grand Jury, but the attempts to arrest them proved unsuccessful. The High Sheriff adds: "The much greater part of this county being Papist, it is very difficult to take priests or other ecclesiastical persons, and the few Protestants in it are afraid of meddling with them."¹

In the borough of Bandon, in the year 1702, a by-law was enacted prohibiting Catholics from holding any

¹ Irish Record Office. Thos. Crofton to Govt., July 28, 1714.

occupation in the town or even living there ; any freeman letting a house to a Catholic was subjected to a heavy fine, and any one "refusing to join in turning out said Irish Papists" was declared to be an enemy of the borough and incapable in future of holding any office or of enjoying the privileges of a freeman. The provost of the borough at this time, happening to meet on the road a priest named Father Sheehan, who had been administering the sacraments to some sick person, he at once arrested him, and without even bringing him to the town caused him to be hanged at the first cross-roads he came to.

In 1706, another bye-law was made prohibiting any of the townspeople from receiving a Catholic apprentice or teaching Catholics any trade or occupation. Any one transgressing this law was to be himself expelled from the town, and subjected to a severe fine. When Dean Swift visited Bandon in 1729 he found the anti-Catholic spirit so rampant that upon its gates the couplet was written :—

" Jew, Turk, or Atheist
May enter here, but not a Papist."

He wittily added the famous retort :—

" He who wrote this wrote it well,
The same is written o'er the gate of hell."

The Provost of Bandon, Ralph Clear, addressed a letter to the Government on the 6th of March, 1743 (Irish Record Office), in which he states that "no priest, or Paptist, was ever, since the late King James's reign, suffered to reside within this town ; the inhabitants are all Protestants, and by our corporation laws no others can live among us." John Wesley visited Bandon in 1749, and he describes it in his journal as "a town entirely inhabited by Protestants." Very soon after his visit, Catholics began to get a footing in the poorer quarters of the town, and before the year 1780 there was a considerable Catholic population.

At that time the people of Bandon and of the surrounding country used to assemble for Mass at Kilhassen, several miles to the west of Bandon, where a small building, thirty feet long by twelve feet broad, was raised and covered with straw. The materials used in this structure were of the rudest kind; the stones were taken from the ditches, or collected off the fields, and the rafters were pine trees roughly shaped to support the thatch. Even the altar was nothing more than a pile of undressed stones put together by unskilful hands, and bedded in clay mortar. An addition of fifteen feet by twelve was made to the eastern side of this chapel by Father Daniel Quinlan, but he was unable to roof it. Consequently, when the wind blew from the east the congregation was exposed to its biting effects; and to avoid this another rude altar was erected on the western side of the gable, so that there the people could find some shelter.

After some time another chapel was erected in a field at Round Hill, close to which a village grew up, now known as Old Chapel. At length, in 1796, a site at Gallows' Hill, in the town of Bandon, was given for a Catholic chapel, but the building was hardly finished, when during the disturbances of 1798 it was turned into a horse-barrack. That old building has long since been exchanged for the present beautiful parochial church, whilst the town furthermore enjoys the advantage of a Convent of Presentation Nuns, and has a great majority of Catholics in its population.

The Right Rev. Dr. Comerford, in his *History of the United Dioceses of Kildare and Leighlin*, gives some interesting details regarding Mountrath: "In the latter portion of the last and the beginning of the present century," he says, "Orangeism was rampant in the town of Mountrath, and the Catholics were subjected to constant insults and acts of violence from the dominant faction. In every lease granted on the Castlecoote estate, on which the town was built, a clause was inserted prohibiting the letting, selling, or bestowal of ground for

the purpose of erecting a Catholic church. In consequence of this prohibition, the humble place of worship used by the Catholics stood upon a sandbank of the tributary of the River Nore, at a place called 'The Brook,' just outside the town. Some of the old inhabitants remember to see men occupied in teeming water out of the chapel on Saturday evenings, in order that the people might be enabled to assemble there for Mass next day. About the year 1794 Dr. Delany, Bishop of the diocese, who held Mountrath as a mensal parish, determined, if possible, to build a church for the parishioners. The Lord Castlecoote of the day was as much opposed as his predecessors had been to the erection of Catholic places of worship. After commending the cause to heaven by public devotion, he made application for a site to a Mr. Hawksworth, agent to Lord Castlecoote. This gentleman gave the bishop a plot of ground then in his own possession, and shortly after, through his influence with the proprietor, procured a lease for ever of it as a site for a Catholic church. On this site the church was commenced about the year 1795. The people, accustomed to the small thatched chapels of penal times, often built of mud, were amazed at the extensive dimensions of the new foundations, and distrusting the possibility of completing it, came to call it by the name of 'Delany's Folly.' It is related that a stalwart priest named Dunne, then doing duty in the parish, used to accompany the men engaged in drawing building materials for the chapel, armed with a stout blackthorn, to repel any hostile attempt on the part of the aggressive Orangemen. Fitzpatrick, in his *Life of J. K. L.*, refers to an attack made in 1798 on the priests of the neighbourhood assembled in conference at Mountrath, by a party of armed yeomanry, the intruders supposing, or intending to suppose, that the priests had met together for unlawful purposes. In 1808 Father Duane, administrator of the parish, a delicate, timid man, had his house attacked at night by the Orangemen; he made his

escape by scaling a wall, and took refuge under the arch of a bridge. The cold and wetting he endured there, together with the terror, brought on an illness from which he died. Curious to relate, the house then used as an Orange Lodge is now incorporated with the present convent."

In the same diocese at Tullow, in the County Carlow, the military in 1798 stabled their horses in the Catholic church, which in those days was regarded as the cathedral of the diocese. The bishop, Dr. Delany, would never afterwards allow Holy Mass to be said within its walls, but set to work to erect the present beautiful church. Whilst it was being built, Mass was celebrated on Sundays in a room on the upper floor of the house in which the bishop resided, about a mile distant from Tullow. The windows of the room were thrown open, and the congregation assembled on the green field in front of the house.

The devices of those who wielded the power of the State for the destruction of the Catholic Church in Ireland furnish, at times, invaluable authentic information regarding the unconquerable attachment of its devoted people to the Faith. Before the close of the seventeenth century all the places of Catholic worship and all the institutions of education and charity had been transferred to the service of an alien creed, whilst the Catholic population was subjected to all the hardships of the direst servitude. A price was put on the priest's head, and it was only in the bogs and on the hills that holy Mass could be offered. In the Journal of the Protestant Bishop of Cork, Dr. Downes, under the date May 27, 1700, there is the following entry regarding Kilmeen parish: "The Popish priest, called Daniel Sullivan, lives in another parish; he celebrates Mass generally in a ditch, sheltered with a few bushes and sods, and sometimes in a cabin." As years went on a sort of tacit toleration was extended to unpretentious places of resort for Catholic worship; but in 1730 Protestant bigotry became alarmed at the fact,

which none could gainsay, that the piety of the people was no less fervent at the rude, unadorned altars, than it had been when in the enjoyment of the grand monumental churches of the ages of Faith. The decree accordingly went forth that all places of Catholic worship should be closed, and, the better to secure this result, an official return was ordered, in which, among other details, was to be set forth the number of chapels or other edifices in which the Catholics were accustomed to assemble for Divine worship in the various dioceses of Ireland. The Protestant bishops were to use all diligence to secure accurate information on this head, and to judge from the reports published by order of the Lords' Committee of Parliament, they left nothing undone to supply the legislators with all the information that they required. To take one instance, the Protestant Bishop of Cloyne in his report dated the 14th of December, 1731, sets forth that "there are seventy Mass-houses in the Diocese of Cloyne. These Mass-houses are generally mean thatched cabins, many, or most of them, open at one end. Some new Mass-houses have been attempted to be raised about three years ago, particularly at Cloyne and Charleville, within view of the churches of those towns, and where no Mass-houses were before. But the finishing of the same has been hitherto prevented by the care of the respective magistrates of these places."

The reports from the other dioceses are pretty much in the same strain. They reveal the startling fact that throughout all Ireland in those days nothing more stately than a mud hut was tolerated as a place of Catholic worship. But henceforward even this toleration was to be regarded as too great a boon, and in most districts of Ireland, during the subsequent dismal period of the Penal Laws, it was only in hiding-places, or in some silent glen or solitary valley, or out in the fields, under the broad canopy of heaven, that the Catholic people could assist at the Holy Sacrifice. Great had been of old the humiliation of the faithful people when they saw their cathedral and parochial churches, many

of them monuments of the piety of their fathers and hallowed by the most endearing memories of the early Saints, handed over by the Government to alien ministers. No less intense was now their sorrow when the humbler mud structures, raised by their own hands, were to be forcibly closed or levelled to the ground. Still the Holy Sacrifice was not interrupted. There is scarcely a parish throughout the whole extent of the kingdom in which the Mass-bush, or the Mass-field, or the Mass-garden, or the Bohreen-an-Aifrion, or some similar name, is not found to mark the spot where, in those days of peril, the priest and his flock were wont to assemble to offer their supreme act of homage to God. Forty years ago many were still living whose parents used to point out the quarries or the sandpits in lonely places whither, in olden times, at morning's dawn, they were led in their childhood to assist at Mass. Whilst they were assembled there some would remain on guard at the outskirts to sound the alarum at the approach of danger. The Right Rev. Patrick M'Gettigan, Bishop of Raphoe, used to relate that in his childhood he was often placed on the summit of a high rock to signal the approach of the priest-hunters, whilst in an adjoining hollow the parishioners were assembled around their temporary altar on which the Holy Sacrifice was offered up. As he advanced a little in years some others took the post of sentinel on the rock, whilst he himself became one of the acolytes, for there were no candlesticks on the altar in those days: at each end of the temporary altar an acolyte held a small candle, and sometimes when the weather was severe all their industry would prove fruitless to keep the candles lighted till the close of the august sacrifice.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH

Toleration at Dunmore—Mass-field at Ballaghadareen—Mass-corner on Collin mountain—Holy Thorn at Ballygalget—Thatched chapel at Inch—Altar of sods at Clontaghmaglar—Rock altars—The Mass Forth in Kilkeel—Statement of the Protestant Bishop of Down and Connor—Three stages of progress at Kilmore—English tourist's experience—Mass in the fields at Coleraine—Mass in the ruins of the Rock of Cashel, and at St. Canice's, Aghabhoë—Old churches at Lisburn and Struell—Mud-wall chapel at Callan—Priest's escape through the gable wall of his chapel—Parochial church of Nire, County Waterford—The sound of the horn gives notice of Mass at Glenmore—Catholic chapels tolerated, but without bell or steeple—Temporary place of worship in Belfast, at Dolphin's Barn, and Enniskerry, and Athy—Thatched chapel at Arless, and Lisnafuncheon—Place of worship at Luke's Well, and Corofin—Shiel's eulogy of Father Murphy of Corofin—Chapel at Sandyford—Chapel of Roundwood burnt down in 1798—The Diocese of Killalla in 1834—Montalembert's witness to Catholic piety at Blarney and elsewhere—His letter in 1831—The chapel at Gweedore in Donegal.

It was considered a great step in the path of toleration when at Dunmore, in the neighbourhood of Kilkenny, about the year 1760, it was permitted to have Mass in the open field, whilst a movable shed in the form of a sentry-box served to shelter the priest engaged in the sacred mysteries. About a mile from the parish of Ballaghadareen, in the old parish of Kilcoleman, there is a field known as the Mass-field. In its centre there is a piece of masonry consisting of a fourfold apse, or archway, facing each side of the compass. The temporary altar was shifted each Sunday according as the wind was blowing, and thus the priest was partially

sheltered whilst offering the Holy Sacrifice. On one side the field is skirted by a lake, and at the other extremity there is a hill, on which the sentinel kept watch whilst the faithful were assembled. In the parish of Derryaghy, Diocese of Down and Connor, on the side of Collin Mountain fronting Hannahstown, Mass used to be said under the shelter of a little mound about 16 feet in diameter. The spot is still called the Mass-corner. The vestments were kept at the house of a respectable farmer named Steele, the last of whose family till the present generation preserved a cow's horn which was used to sound the alarm if any suspicious persons were observed to approach the place while the priest was saying Mass. There was another Mass-station in the same parish on the Bohill mountain. There two mounds of earth intersected each other, so as to form a cross, each arm of which was about 50 feet in length. Mass was celebrated in the angle of this cross that happened to be most sheltered from the storm.¹

In the parish of Ballygalget, Mass used to be said on the hill of Knockdoo, at a whitethorn still called the Holy Thorn. Subsequently, through the kindness of a local Protestant, a thatched cabin was put up, in which, during six days of the week, one Beatie, who had been a long time on board a man-of-war, held with impunity a school for the children of the neighbourhood, whilst on Sundays it was used for Mass. In the parish of Inch there still remains an old thatched chapel, surrounded by barren rocks and an extensive forest of furze bushes. It was completed on Hallow eve in the year 1769. Close by it is the Mass rock, on which till that time holy Mass was offered by the hunted priests. The rock altar may still be seen, and the high cliff is also pointed out on which the watchmen kept guard against the approach of their pursuers. In the same parish another station used to be kept in a field, called the

¹ Lavery, *Down and Connor*, ii. 354.

Altar Park, and in the townland of Clontagnaglar, the altar of sods, which was often used for the Holy Sacrifice, is still religiously preserved on the farm of a devoted Catholic. On the road from Saul to Raholp there is a natural ledge of rock, popularly known as the Lord's Table, which in time of persecution served as an unhewn altar. At Coniamstown, in the parish of Bright, are still to be seen an altar and reredos, cut out of the solid rock. There are also, cut into the rock, two small triangular recesses for holding the cruets and other altar requisites. In the parish of Kilkeel, Mass was celebrated in the open at a place called the Mass Forth. In the year 1811 a small chapel was begun on the spot hallowed by so many religious traditions; and in our own days this small chapel has been replaced by a magnificent parochial church. The Protestant Bishop of Down and Connor in his report to Parliament in 1731, as preserved in the Public Record Office, states that he had received accurate returns regarding the priests and papists from fifty-six parishes, and in all these "there are but four schools and five Mass houses; but," he adds, "they say Mass upon mountains and in private houses." In Kilmore there is an instance where the three successive stages are found almost side by side: 1st, the ledge of rock consecrated by the prayers and tears of the faithful people in the time of the persecution; 2nd, the thatched hut with mud walls erected late in the last century; 3rd, a beautiful parochial church dedicated to the glory of God in our own days. An English tourist who visited Ireland in 1746 thus writes regarding the religion of the people: "The poorer sort of Irish natives are Roman Catholics, who make no scruple to assemble in the open fields. As we passed yesterday in a by-road, we saw a priest under a tree, with a large assembly about him, celebrating Mass in his proper habit; and though at a great distance from him we heard him distinctly."¹ So, too, in the year 1743 the local magistrate reports to

...¹ Chetwood, *Tour through Ireland*, p. 163. . .

Government from Coleraine that there was one resident priest, who with his curate attended to that town and the adjoining districts corresponding to four parishes, officiating "in the fields, there being no Mass-houses in any of those places."¹

At times, too, the faithful made use of the neglected ruins of the ancient churches built by their fathers, and silently assembled there to assist at the Holy Sacrifice. About the middle of last century some tourists visiting the Rock of Cashel on a Sunday morning, to their surprise found the ruined aisle crowded with a pious congregation, who assisted in rapt devotion whilst the priest at a temporary altar celebrated Mass. Never in its golden splendour did St. Cormac's chapel present a sight more pleasing to heaven than when the proscribed children of the Church thus assembled on the spot where their fathers had a century before shed their blood for the Faith, animated with the same piety, and ready to give proof of the same heroism. So, too, at the ruins of St. Canice's old church in Aghabhoë. A small Protestant stable-like church had been erected close by, towards the beginning of the century, where, at a fashionable hour, the minister and the Protestant gentry at times attended, but at break of day the faithful met under the shelter of the broken arches and mouldering walls, and beneath the mullioned window of the ruined sanctuary the priest performed the most solemn rites of religion. In times of special danger the pastor and his flock were forced to seek a more concealed retreat on some of the neighbouring hills. It was considered as a wonderful proof of progress that a Catholic church was permitted to be erected in the parish of Aghabhoë in the beginning of the present century. That church has now become the parochial school, whilst a most beautiful new Catholic church crowns the adjoining eminence, and not only rivals, but surpasses the glory of the sacred edifice which was the pride of the parishioners in former

¹ Letter of W. Jackson, March 10, 1743. Public Record Office.

times. In the parish of Lisburn an old Catholic church was burned down in 1742. The faithful continued to assemble for Mass under a large tree which stood close to it: So also at Saul, the Catholics at first ventured to assemble in a barn; afterwards, calculating too much on the forbearance of their enemies, they repaired the walls of an ancient but abandoned chapel at Struell, and were proceeding to put a roof on it, when the Rev. Thos. Brereton, Protestant curate of Down, accompanied by a mob, went out to Struell, and pulled down the chapel. Tradition preserves the record that one who was foremost in this work of irreligious vandalism soon after expired, having first, in paroxysms of rage, torn with his teeth his own flesh.

Some of the old thatched and mud-walled structures that were used as chapels in intervals of comparative peace have continued in use down to our own time, the crumbling walls being as a rule replaced by a more solid structure. In Callan, whilst the present friary church was being built, Mass continued to be said in the old chapel. The last time the faithful assembled there, the crumbling walls gave way, and the congregation were obliged to support the thatched roof with their hands till the priest had finished the celebration of Mass. In one of these mud-wall chapels on a festival day the faithful were assembled, and Mass had just begun, when a priest-hunter led unobserved a body of soldiers to the spot, and, stationing them outside at each window and at the door, boldly called upon the priest to surrender, as escape was impossible. It was granted as a favour that the priest might be allowed to finish Mass, and then the people would offer no resistance. No sooner, however, had the celebrant at the close of Mass taken off the sacred vestments than he jumped through the crumbling gable-wall, and before his pursuers could realize their position he had disappeared in the neighbouring fastnesses, with which he was familiar. On Sunday, the 24th of August, 1879, the beautiful parochial church of Nire, in the County Waterford, was dedicated, and its

bell was blessed. The old chapel there was a thatched building, and the faithful were summoned together by the blowing of a horn; hence it became popularly known as *chapeol an airka*, i.e., the chapel of the horn. The horn was also used in the parish of Glenmore. The priest went around from district to district. The horn from some hill-top resounding through the glens notified the hour when Mass was to be said. Those that were able assembled at the place where it was known that Mass would be celebrated, and those that could not travel so far knelt down on their own cabin floor, turning their faces towards that hallowed spot, and from the depths of their hearts united their affections with the Holy Sacrifice that was being offered up.

Even when the Penal Laws began to be relaxed, and it was permitted to the faithful to build chapels and to openly assist in them at the Holy Sacrifice, this permission was granted only with the condition that such chapels should be erected in out-of-the-way places, and that the sacred ceremonies should be performed without pomp or display. Indeed in the very Act of Parliament (21st and 22nd of George III.) which gave the priest liberty to perform publicly the Catholic rites, the clause was added that he was to forfeit the benefit of this indulgence should he celebrate worship in any building ornamented with a steeple or having a bell attached to it. In Belfast the Catholics used at first to assemble in one of the sandpits near Friar's Bush; later on a portion of a waste house was secured in Mill Street, the approach to it being by a narrow passage called Squeeze-gut Entry. So unsuited was its earthen floor for a religious assembly, particularly in the wet weather, that the people were obliged to bring with them a brick or a piece of board on which they might kneel. At Dolphin's Barn, in the suburbs of Dublin, the old chapel, which was erected about 120 years ago, still remains. It is an oblong thatched cabin, and a chimney is added at the end, the better to conceal its religious purpose. At Enniskerry Mass to our own time was said on Sundays in what was

known as the Linen Hall, no site being available for the erection of a church.

In Athy the old thatched chapel was burnt down in 1798. For a few years Mass was said in one of the storehouses on the canal. Subsequently a Catholic officer who was stationed there got a canopy erected in the market-place attached to the court-house wall, and under it a temporary altar was erected on Sunday mornings, the faithful people kneeling all around. At length the site of the present beautiful parochial church and convent was granted by the Duke of Leinster. It had hitherto been a sort of sand-pit or commons; and there the church was begun about the year 1810. In Grose's *Antiquities of Ireland* there is an engraving which presents the Protestant church of Arless as it was about the year 1780. Close by there is a ruinous hovel with a thatched roof, part of which has fallen in. This was the then Catholic chapel of the town of Arless. A most beautiful Gothic building, one of the finest parochial churches of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin, has now replaced that unsightly structure. The present thatched school at Lisnafunchion, in the County of Kilkenny, was till a late period the parochial church of Conahy. One of the parish priests of Ossory, lately living, said his first Mass in it. It had then an open thatched roof. This, however, was found unsuited for the requirements of a national school, and a boarded ceiling had to be introduced. So, too, more ornamental windows were deemed necessary, and hence the present glazed windows were substituted for those of the old chapel. At Luke's Well, also in the County of Kilkenny, a long narrow shed was for a considerable time used as a chapel; so low was it that you could touch the thatch with your hand. On weekdays it served as a school for about 200 children, for whom there was only one master. Persons are still living who spent their schooldays in it. Before this chapel was built Mass used to be said in an upper room of a public-house there.

At Corofin, in the county of Clare, in the beginning of

the present century, before the present church was built, Mass used at times to be said on the ground floor of the market-house, while in the upper part religious service was carried on by some Protestant sect. The memory of the devoted parish priest, Father Murphy, who in those days ministered there, is embalmed in the traditions of his people. Of him the eloquent Shiel pronounced the striking panegyric: "Where does he reside? In a horrible abode situated at the foot of a mountain, encompassed on every side by dreariness and waste. He dwells in the midst of his parishioners, and is their benefactor, their friend, their father. It is not only in the actual ministry of the sacraments of religion that he stands as an object of affectionate reverence among them; I saw him, indeed, at his altar, surrounded by thousands, and felt myself the influence of his contagious and enthusiastic devotion. He addressed the people in the midst of a rude edifice, and in a language (the Irish) which I did not understand; but I could perceive what a command he had over the minds of his devoted followers. It is not merely as the celebrant of Divine worship that he is dear to his flock; he is their companion, the mitigator of their calamities, the soother of their afflictions, the trustee of their hearts, the repository of their secrets, the guardian of their interests, and the sentinel of their deathbeds." It was in the year 1823 that the Rev. P. Smyth, the late parish priest of Sandyford, in the County Dublin, was appointed to the curacy of that district which then formed part of the parish of Cabinteely, and he wrote in 1829 the following account of its parochial buildings. He found on his arrival, he says, "Two old thatched chapels, one at Sandyford, ready to yield at every blast, with a thatched hovel adjoining (for the priest), both now demolished; and also the walls of a church partly built and lying exposed for sixteen years, roofless and unfinished, on a bleak common, without wall or fence. He found also another thatched chapel, part of which still remains and is used as a barn, at Newtown, on the mountain side.

There was no schoolhouse in the whole union of parishes. In those days school was held in the chapels. So that nothing now remains of church property then existing (*i.e.*, in 1823) excepting the walls of Sandyford aforesaid; the ground on which it was built; the old barn at Newtown; an altar stone; one suit of old green and white vestments; a registry of births and marriages that commences with the year 1760 and ends with 1793; and an old missal unfit for use."

In the correspondence of Archbishop Troy in 1798 and the following years, we meet with several letters referring to the chapels which, in that disastrous period, were burned, or otherwise destroyed by the Orange yeomen and military. The chapel of Roundwood, in the county of Wicklow, which was one of those burnt to the ground, is spoken of as being of more than ordinary value, and yet the whole estimate presented to Government for compensation, including the altar, and altar furniture, and windows, and doors, was only £45 5s. 5d. This will enable us to form some idea of how poor were the parochial churches in Leinster at the close of the last century. But what are we to think of the picture of desolation which the West of Ireland presented in those days, when even as late as the 8th of January, 1834, at a public meeting of the Catholics of the Diocese of Killalla, a petition to the House of Commons was adopted, setting forth: "That the parishes in this Diocese have long been deprived of Catholic churches; the consequence is that a numerous population, destitute of every other source of instruction, are obliged to absent themselves from religious worship, or to attend it under all the inclemency of the most rigorous seasons: that in this Diocese alone upwards of 30,000 souls are obliged on every Sunday to hear Mass under the canopy of heaven."

It was in 1829, after a tour through Ireland, that the illustrious Montalembert published in Paris his *Lettres sur le Catholicisme en Irlande*, and he thus describes what he had witnessed in country districts when assisting

at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: "I shall never forget the first Mass which I heard in a country chapel. I rode to the foot of a hill, the lower part of which was clothed with a thick plantation of oak and fir, and alighted from my horse to ascend it. I had taken only a few steps on my way when my attention was attracted by the appearance of a man who knelt at the foot of one of the firs; several others became visible in succession in the same attitude; and the higher I ascended the larger became the numbers of these kneeling peasants. At length, on reaching the top of the hill, I saw a cruciform building badly built of stone, without cement, and covered by thatch. Around it knelt a crowd of robust and vigorous men, all uncovered, though the rain fell in torrents and the mud quivered beneath them. Profound silence reigned everywhere. It was the Catholic chapel of Blarney, and the priest was saying Mass. I reached the door at the moment of the Elevation, and all this pious assembly had prostrated themselves with their faces on the earth. I made an effort to penetrate under the roof of the chapel thus overflowed by worshippers. There were no seats, no decorations, nor even a pavement; the floor was of earth, damp and stony, the roof dilapidated, and tallow candles burned on the altar in place of tapers. I heard the priest announce, in Irish, the language of the Catholic people, that on such a day he would go, in order to save his parishioners the trouble of a long journey, to a certain 'cabin,' which should for the moment be turned into the House of God—there to administer the Sacraments and receive the humble offerings with which his flock supported him. When the Holy Sacrifice was ended the priest mounted his horse and rode away; then each worshipper rose from his knees and went slowly homeward; some of them, wandering harvestmen, carrying their reaping-hooks, turned their steps towards the nearest cottage to ask the hospitality to which they were considered to have a right; others, with their wives riding behind them *en croupe*, went off to their distant homes. Many remained for a much longer time in

prayer, kneeling in the mud in that silent enclosure chosen by the poor and faithful people in the times of ancient persecutions. . . . I have only shared Ireland's daily piety ; I have but seen, in passing, her habitual trials and virtues. Often on Sunday, when entering an Irish town, I have seen the streets encumbered with kneeling figures of labouring men in all directions, turning their looks always towards some low doorway, some obscure lane which led to the Catholic chapel, built behind the houses in those times of persecution, when the exercise of that worship was treason. The immense crowd which endeavoured to force an entrance into the narrow and hidden interior prevented the approach of two-thirds of the faithful, but they knew that Mass was being said, and they knelt in all the surrounding streets, joining themselves in spirit to the priest of the Most High. Very often I have mixed with them, and enjoyed their looks of astonishment when they saw a stranger, a man not poor like themselves, taking the holy water with them and bowing before their altar. And often also, from the gallery reserved for the women, I have contemplated one of the most curious sights which it is possible to imagine—the nave of the Catholic chapel during the sermon. This part of the church was given up to the men ; there were no seats, and the population crowded into it in floods, each tide rising higher until the first comers were pushed forward against the altar-rails, and so crowded together that they could not move a limb. All that could be seen of them was a moving mass of dark-haired heads, so close together that one could have walked across them without danger. From moment to moment this mass moved and wavered, long groans and deep sighs became audible ; some dried their eyes, some beat their breasts ; every gesture of the preacher was understood on the instant, and the impression produced was not concealed. A cry of love or of grief answered each of his entreaties, each of his reproaches. The spectator saw that it was a father speaking to his children, and that the children loved their father."

In 1831, when a charitable collection in aid of the suffering poor of Ireland was inaugurated in Paris by the editors of the *Avenir*, the same eloquent writer, in forwarding a first instalment to the Archbishop of Dublin, gave expression to his joy in having the opportunity of thus renewing "an alliance of charity and sympathy between the Catholics of Ireland and of France"; and he added:—

"I hardly terminated the address to the Catholics of France on behalf of the poor Irish, with the copy of the documents which the London Committee had forwarded to me, when the dangerous symptoms of my father's illness prevented me from further attending to my usual avocations. This illness has since ended fatally, and I have been bereaved of the most loving and beloved parent. . . . I hope to be able to profit soon of a sure opportunity to forward to your Grace a small essay of mine on the state of Catholicism in Ireland, which produced great sympathy among our French Catholics, and which I have in vain attempted to send to Ireland. It is a feeble but sincere tribute of my gratitude and my affection towards those brethren in Jesus Christ, whose faith and ardent piety have done more than anything else to fix my life in the faith which I shall never abandon."¹

The terrible catastrophe which occurred in the parochial chapel of Gweedore, in Donegal, some twenty years ago, riveted for a time the attention of the public on one of those hallowed spots where the faithful had been accustomed to assemble for Mass ever since the penal times. The chapel was so situated in a glen about half a mile from Gweedore that one might approach within a few perches of it without seeing anything save the cross, which seemed to arise out of a brake of heather. No site could be procured from any of the

¹ Letter from Paris to Archbishop Murray, July 10, 1831. The original is in English.

landlords in the neighbourhood, and hence the little chapel was built in a ravine across the bed of a rapid mountain torrent which foamed and danced beneath, rushing on to the sea. This site was claimed as their own by the parishioners, and was held by prescription. Ever since the beginning of the last century it was here that the Catholics of the surrounding hills assembled for the Holy Sacrifice. Sentries were posted on the edge of the cliffs above, whilst a ledge on the rocks, still pointed out, served as an altar. When the Penal Laws began to be relaxed the sentries were dispensed with and a wooden box was fixed on the natural altar ledge to shelter the celebrant during the Sacred Mysteries. Later on a permanent wooden hut was constructed, open at the end facing down the stream. This, however, only covered the altar and the priest and the attendant ; while for the faithful, in summer or winter, the sky was still the only canopy. At length, about sixty years ago, the "new chapel," as it was called, was built, bridging over the stream, and this continued to be used as the parochial church till our own time. A sudden flood in the rapid stream while the congregation was assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, and the terrible loss of life which ensued, served to fix the attention of the civilized world on the fact that even in the last quarter of the nineteenth century there were districts in Ireland where a site would not be granted for a Catholic church, and where it was only on the hills and in the ravines that the faithful could kneel around the altar of God, and worship in the faith of their fathers.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

Irish Catholics deprived of the benefits and blessings of education—The Catholic schoolmaster a difficulty in the way of Protestantism—Petition of Protestant bishops and clergy to have Popish schoolmasters suppressed—Words of Walpole—Enactments in Queen Anne's reign—Special reward to informers—A price set on the head of the schoolmaster—The Royal laws enforced in Sligo—In Longford—In Dublin—James Tankard, schoolmaster, transported—Information against Timothy Sullivan—Transportation and slavery—Nano Nagle's imperishable work for religious education—Testimony of Dr. England, Bishop of Charleston—Religious communities of nuns in Galway—In Dublin—In Drogheda—Failure of the Penal enactments—Old maxim of Celtic piety—The underground cave at Mellifont—Campion's words—Other testimonies—Richard Creagh, Archbishop of Armagh, teaches the rudiments at Limerick—Thatched cabin of Dr. Leverous, Bishop of Kildare—F. Ford's school in the centre of a bog—Eagerness of children for learning—The hedge schools—Carolan, the last of the Irish minstrels—Honours to Irish talent on the Continent—Some illustrious names.

IN the present chapter we will give a brief sketch of the efforts that were made under the Penal Laws to deprive the Catholics of Ireland of the benefits and blessings of education. We may be permitted to quote the words of the Right Rev. Dr. Healy, in his *Centenary History of Maynooth College*, when referring to the sad condition of the Irish Church in those dismal days: "During the period of the Penal Laws there was no voice of wailing that was not heard, there was no shape of sorrow that was not to be seen in unhappy Ireland. The book of her history during that period is written within and with-

out ; and the burden of the story is lamentation and mourning and woe. It is well for us to remember these things ; they are written for our learning, and are designed to teach us the best of all things—that of patient endurance for conscience' sake. The day may come when we shall need this lesson once again, and then the memory of what our fathers suffered for the Catholic faith and for Catholic education will be, as it were, a cordial to strengthen weak hearts to fight that battle over again, no matter who may be the foe, or what the consequences. The record of the Penal Laws against Catholic education in Ireland will serve to show two things in the clearest light ; first, that there was no device of wicked ingenuity left untried to rob the people of their faith, and of all the learning that is based on faith ; and secondly, that no nation has ever exhibited greater self-sacrifice and more heroic devotion for the preservation of their faith, and of the learning that is purified and elevated by faith."

The Catholic schoolmaster was, from the first, a difficulty in the way of those who would rob Ireland of her Catholic faith. During the reign of James the First repeated complaints were made of the Catholic schools of Kilkenny and other towns ; and a little later, when the Protestant Convocation met in Dublin in 1636, a formal petition of the Protestant bishops and clergy was presented to Government, praying that "all Popish schoolmasters be suppressed" (Mant. I. 5-10). Under the Cromwellian rule the severest enactments were passed, which failed, however, to "suppress" the Irish schoolmaster. It was reserved for the Penal Laws of the eighteenth century to make a supreme effort to lay the axe to the root, and to render Catholic education impossible for Irish Catholics in any shape or form, whether at home or abroad.

Walpole, in his *Kingdom of Ireland*, gives the following sketch of the laws against Catholic education, passed in the Irish Parliament of 1695 : "The first of the Penal Statutes passed by the Irish Houses (of Parlia-

ment) was aimed at the education of the Roman Catholics, and their connection with the Continental seminaries. It provided that every one who sent a child abroad, or went abroad himself, to be trained in the Roman Catholic religion, should be liable to the forfeiture of all his real and personal estate, and should be disabled from acting as a guardian, executor, or administrator, from filling any office, or from taking the benefit of any legacy or deed of gift. That any one *suspected* of contravening this Act should be liable to be brought before a magistrate, and bound over in recognisances of not less than £200 not to quit the kingdom, and to appear at Quarter Sessions and take his trial for this offence. That any common informer could set the law in motion, and recover half the forfeiture, the other moiety going to the Crown; the burden of proof of innocence being cast on the accused. No Papist was to keep a school or teach scholars in a private house, under a penalty of £20 or three months' imprisonment. And it was further provided that two old Acts, one of Henry VIII., and the other of Elizabeth, for the erection of free (Protestant) schools in every parish, which had become a dead letter, should be put into execution."

The Parliament in the second year of Queen Anne renewed, under still more stringent penalties, the prohibition to send any child for education to the Continent. Subsequent Acts obliged all persons holding "any employment, office, or place of profit," under her Majesty, to bring up their children Protestants, under penalty of forfeiture of their office; and "whatever person of the Popish religion shall publicly teach school, or instruct youth in learning in any private house within this realm, or be entertained to instruct youth, as usher or assistant, by any Protestant schoolmaster, he shall be esteemed a Popish regular clergyman, and prosecuted as such; and no person, after November 1, 1709, shall be qualified to teach or keep such a school publicly, or instruct youth in any private house, or as usher or assis-

tant to any Protestant schoolmaster, who shall not first, at the next General Assizes or Quarter Sessions, take the oath of abjuration, under a penalty of £10; and any person entertaining a teacher not qualified, or a tutor or usher, shall forfeit £10 for every such offence, a moiety to go to the informer."

Another section of the same Act of Parliament assigned a special reward to the informer. The *discovery* of a bishop or other dignitary was to be recompensed with £50; that of a priest, not registered, with £20; that of a schoolmaster or tutor or usher, with £10; such sums "to be levied on the Popish inhabitants of the country where such clergyman did officiate, or where such schoolmaster did most commonly reside."

As time rolled on further penalties were enacted. The same price was set on the head of the Catholic schoolmaster as on the head of a wild beast. It was in the power of the magistrates to seize upon any Catholic, and to compel him to answer upon oath whether he knew of any Catholic teacher living in the district. Sometimes even the bloodhounds were set upon the track of the Catholic schoolmaster, on the mountains or in the woods.

Nor is it to be supposed that these laws were made only to terrify, or that they remained dead letters on the statute book. On the contrary, they were carried out with the utmost rigour. Any one who visits the Public Record Office in Dublin may see there the original records that witness to the severity with which the Penal Laws were executed. Under the year 1712 he will find that a number of Catholics in the county of Sligo were on a sudden arrested, and brought before the magistrates and compelled to answer upon oath when and where they had assisted at Mass, and whether any Catholic school was kept in their respective districts. They avowed to have assisted at Mass, but they knew nothing of any Catholic school. Under the year 1713 is preserved a correspondence of the High Sheriff of Longford with the Secretary of the Castle, setting forth that

at the County Assizes two Papists named Patrick Ferall and John Lennon had been found guilty of keeping a school, and had been accordingly sentenced to transportation; the modest request is added that the Secretary "would let the Government know that two such men were in the gaol of Longford, under the rule of transportation," and that the sentence be put into execution without delay. Under the year 1714 the Sheriff of Dublin reports to the Government that two other Papist schoolmasters "are in the county gaols under sentence of transportation." Again in 1724 a Catholic schoolmaster named James Tankard was indicted "for that he, being a Papist, kept a public school and instructed youth, without having taken the oaths." It is added that "he confessed the crime, and sentence of transportation was at once passed." Under the year 1730 there is the affidavit of a pervert and informer named Waldron, in the county Limerick, who declares that about twelve years before, a Papist, by name Timothy Sullivan, kept a school in Dublin, which the informant had attended; that the said Sullivan had brought over two students of Trinity College to Popery; that he had been subsequently committed to prison and transported; but that he had now returned to Ireland under another name, and was again engaged teaching school in a little town in the county of Limerick. A warrant was at once issued for the culprit's arrest.

Thus year after year men were thrown into prison and sentenced to transportation for the sole crime of imparting knowledge to Irish youth. Nor are we to suppose that to be transported was a light penalty in those days. Those transported were literally treated as slaves. Mr. Froude, whom nobody will regard as a prejudiced witness where there is question of Irish or Catholic matters, assures us that they "were sold to the planters in the colonies," that thus they might defray in their persons the expense of transporting them. (Froude, *The English in Ireland*, i. p. 593.) By such laws and such penalties it was vainly hoped that barbarism would

be enforced upon the Irish people, or that the Catholic youth of Ireland in their eager desire for knowledge would drink it in at the poisoned sources of heresy.

Two instances will suffice to illustrate the terrible fact that little more than one hundred years ago the storm still fiercely raged against Catholic education throughout the length and breadth of the land. It was in the year 1769 that Nano Nagle began in the back lanes of Cork her work of religion and charity in the instruction of the children of the poor—that imperishable work which, perpetuated and multiplied by the Presentation Nuns and other religious sisterhoods, has ever since produced the happiest fruits and brought untold blessings to Ireland. No sooner did it become known that she was engaged in this pious toil of instructing poor children than the Corporation of the city was summoned to deliberate on the violation of the laws, and to take the necessary steps to punish such a flagrant outrage. The storm was only appeased by the speech of a witty alderman, who remarked that they would make themselves ridiculous before the world were they to prosecute an old woman for teaching girls to mend their mothers' stockings; and thus happily the matter ended.

The illustrious Bishop of Charleston, Dr. England (one of the greatest pillars of the Catholic Church in the United States in his day, one, too, whose bright literary and missionary fame shed lustre on the land of his birth), was the son of an Irish schoolmaster. When he was young his father used to lead him to the lonely cave on the hillside where Mass used to be said in those days of persecution, and where often it had been his privilege to serve at the altar during the Holy Sacrifice. Dr. England's father and grandfather were confessors for the Faith. The bishop himself it is who records their sufferings. "More than forty-five years have passed away," he writes thus in a letter of the 10th of October, 1839, "since a man then about sixty years of age (the bishop's grandfather) led me into a prison and showed me the room in which he had been confined during upwards of

four years, in consequence of the injustice to which the Catholics of Ireland were subjected in those days of persecution. On the day that he was immured his wife was seized on by fever, the result of terror. Whilst she lay on her bed of sickness, she and her family were dispossessed of the last remnant of their land and furniture ; she was removed to the house of a neighbour to breathe her last under a stranger's roof. Her eldest child (who in after times was the bishop's father) had completed his seventeenth year a few days before he closed her grave. Two younger brothers and two younger sisters looked to him as their only support. He endeavoured to turn his education to account. It was discovered that he was a Papist (as the law contumeliously designated a Roman Catholic), and that he was guilty of teaching some propositions of the sixth book of Euclid to a few scholars that he might be able to aid his father and to support his family. Informations were lodged against him for this violation of the law, which rendered him liable to transportation. Compassion was taken upon his youth and his misfortunes, and, instead of proceeding immediately to the prosecution, a message was privately conveyed to him that he would have an opportunity of swearing before the Protestant bishop that he did not believe in the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and that the certificate of the prelate would raise a bar against further prosecution. The devoted youth, however, refused to defile his soul by perjury. He fled into the mountains ; and he remained there for more than a year, subsisting upon the charity of those to whose children he communicated the rudiments of learning. At length the declaration of American Independence produced some mitigation of the Penal Laws. The fugitive was enabled to leave his place of concealment, and his parent was liberated." Such was the terrible period of persecution which was brought to a close only one hundred years ago.

Throughout those penal times some communities of nuns appear to have braved the whole fury of the storm

and preserved unbroken their grand apostolate of imparting to the female youth of Ireland the blessings of religious education. We have already seen¹ how the Poor Clares came to Dublin from Galway in 1712. They were often compelled to change their abode in later years, but still they laboured on. The Dominican Nuns were driven out of the city of Galway in the first year of the eighteenth century, but, residing with their friends, continued to observe their rule as best they could. At the first interval of calm they reassembled within the city, and, without any outward display of the religious habit, engaged once more in all the observances of the religious life. A few of them found a shelter in Dublin under the patronage of the illustrious Archbishop Byrne in 1717, and the community thus formed, despite repeated threats of imprisonment and banishment, resided in Channel Row, New Brunswick Street, till the beginning of the present century. It was this heroic community that handed on the torch of St. Dominic to the present Convent at Cabra, one of the most flourishing and most observant communities in the kingdom (see *Australasian Catholic Record*, vol. iii. n. 2).

The Dominican Nuns entered on their religious work in Drogheda at the invitation of the Primate, Hugh McMahon, in 1721. Sister Catherine Plunkett, niece of the venerable martyred Primate, Oliver Plunkett, was the foundress. A mud cabin on the banks of the Boyne was the first convent, but the Sisters nevertheless zealously devoted themselves to the education of youth. It was only by stealthily crossing the Boyne in a little boat at break of day that the priest could venture there at times to offer the Holy Sacrifice and to administer the Holy Communion to them. It is recorded that though it was impossible for the Sisters to maintain some of the observances of the Rule, such as the religious dress and strict enclosure, yet the Divine Office was punctually recited in choir and the fasts of the Order duly observed.

¹ See Chapter IV.

This community, too, has grown into a great family, and in its present beautiful convent preserves amongst its sacred treasures the head of the glorious Oliver Plunkett, who, by his heroic sufferings for the Faith and martyrdom at Tyburn in 1681, added imperishable lustre to the Primatial See of Armagh.

Some one perhaps will ask, Were the Irish people reduced to barbarism by the Penal Laws, and were the fountains of knowledge irretrievably sealed against them? No; all the efforts of the persecutors were in vain. Penal laws might be enacted; the sword might be unsheathed; the bloodhound might be set upon the teacher's track, yet the schoolmaster did not forsake his scholars, and Irish youth did not cease to satiate their thirst at the untainted fountains of knowledge. It was a maxim in the early ages of Celtic Christian piety that a church without a school was like a fruit tree without fruit. And now, though the storm of persecution swept over the land, it was the watchful pastor's care that the fruit-tree should not be left without its fruit. Wherever a rude hut was erected as a temporary chapel in the depths of the wood or in some lonely spot; wherever the priest could find a refuge, though a price was upon his head, there the rudiments of learning were sure to be taught, together with the truths of Divine faith. A few years ago a pilgrimage was made to the old religious sanctuary at Mellifont, near Drogheda. Some five thousand persons were present, who explored the venerable ruins of the Abbey, the baptistry, the chapel, and the ancient cemetery. Not less interesting than all these to the pious pilgrims was the underground cave where in the Penal days the schoolmaster had taught the Catholic Irish children at the peril of his life.

When the learned Campion, famed in the schools of Oxford, visited Ireland early in Elizabeth's reign he could not conceal his astonishment that though the monasteries were silent and the schools had been swept away, yet the people continued to "speak Latin like a vulgar language" (Campion, *Historie of Ireland*, p. 26). A few years later,

an agent of several of the vast newly-acquired estates in the Desmond territory, attested that he found the Irish people hospitable, civil, faith-keeping, and industrious ; and, he added, "most of them speak good English and bring up their children to learning" (Robert Paine, *Tracts relating to Ireland*, published by Irish Archæological Society). A century later, Sir William Petty found even the poorest of the people well instructed, "nor is the French element unknown to many of them, nor the French and Latin tongues. The latter amongst the poorest Irish, and chiefly in Kerry, is very freely spoken." They were earnest and devoted men who in those dismal days kept alive the spark of knowledge and preserved the light of civilization to the Irish race. Richard Creagh, Archbishop of Armagh, who won for himself a bright aureola among the martyrs for the Faith, taught the rudiments to poor children in a little school at Limerick. The illustrious Leverous, Bishop of Kildare, made his thatched cabin on the borders of the bog of Allen a school to which Irish youths hastened in crowds from the surrounding country. A devoted priest of the name of Ford chose a spot in the centre of a bog and built a rude hut on it for the purposes of a school. A large number of youths soon flocked thither and erected for themselves little huts all around, that they might avail themselves of the lessons of wisdom which he imparted. Thus that dreary spot soon became as an oasis in the desert ; it blossomed as a garden of paradise, and those rude huts became at the same time a centre of piety and of science.

Whenever a momentary toleration dawned upon the country, as in the reign of Charles the First, schools were so multiplied, and children flocked to them in such numbers that at time complaints were sent up to Government from the Plantation settlers that the countless troops of Irish scholars imperilled the State, and gave to their places of resort for instruction the appearance of "universities rather than schools." (See, for instance, "The Humble Petition of the Protestant Inhabitants of

Antrim, Down, and Tyrone" in 1641.) However, whether tolerated or proscribed, whether in storm or in sunshine, the schools went on, and the heroism of the teachers elicited the admiration even of those who persecuted him. The Penal Laws had no terrors for the Irish teacher or for the Irish scholar. On the roadside or on the well-guarded hill, in a dark recess of the woods or in some sheltered glen, the work of education was stealthily pursued. Who has not heard of the hedge schools that sprung up in those terrible times? The hedge served as a shelter from sun and storm: it at the same time shielded the teacher and his cluster of boys from danger. A few sharp-eyed boys were placed as sentinels on some neighbouring eminence to give the alarm, and there was no danger of the master or scholars being stopped at the door. In the meantime the master taught his lessons, and the children hummed around him as bees round their hive. "The 'hedge school,'" writes Dr. Healy, "was not a mere metaphorical expression; it was a reality in the literal sense of the word. It had, indeed, many advantages. No householder could be fined for accommodating and hiding the master; he did not teach either publicly or privately in any house in the legal sense. Then, again, the boys had their eyes wide open, and if any danger appeared, they quietly dispersed, master and all, and assembled next day in some equally convenient and more retired spot. The poor teacher shifted his lodgings from week to week, or from day to day, and so the lamp of learning was kept dimly burning in the Ireland of Saints and Scholars. The name of the hedge school is a name of honour, and proves for all time that the children of Ireland love knowledge with the same deep and passionate love which, in olden days, made Ireland the School of all the West."

A pupil of these hedge schools was Carolan, on whose brow were set the laurels of the old race of Irish minstrels. Goldsmith, when young, was brought to visit this Irish bard. He was impressed beyond measure by his venerable appearance. Of his songs, he writes

that "in general they should be compared to those of Pindar"; and of his music that, for its "spirit and eloquence," it contested the palm "with the finest compositions of Italy" (Goldsmith's *Essays*). And when those days of terror had passed, and a more peaceful era opened for Ireland, what was the condition of its people? An intelligent English traveller who visited Ireland in the commencement of the present century, declared that even the wildest and most mountainous districts had their schools. The structure might be as miserable as miserable can be, yet it had its multitude of pupils humming about it: "The people of Ireland," he writes, "are, I may say, universally educated. . . . Amidst some of the wildest mountains of Kerry I have met with schools, and have seen multitudes of children seated around the humble residence of their instructor, with their books, pens and ink, where rocks have supplied the place of desks and benches."¹

Thus, like the sacred fire in the Jewish temple of old, the spark of learning was kept alive amid all the calamities that overwhelmed the land. But on the Continent, where Irish genius was free from the fetters of the Penal Laws, the highest honours were awarded to Irish talent, and Irish names shone with peerless lustre on some of the most conspicuous stages of both Church and State. Hear how Lord Macaulay refers to the triumphs achieved by Irish genius. "There were indeed Irish Roman Catholics of great ability, energy, and ambition," he writes, "but they were to be found everywhere except in Ireland: at Versailles, and at St. Ildefonso, in the armies of Frederick and in the armies of Maria Teresa. One exile became a marshal of France, another became Prime Minister of Spain. If he had stayed in his native land he would have been regarded as an inferior by all the ignorant and worthless squireens who drank the glorious and immortal memory. In his palace at Madrid he had the pleasure of being assiduously courted by the Ambassador of George II.,

¹ Wakefield, *An Account of Ireland*, &c., vol. ii. p. 397.

and of bidding defiance to the Ambassador of George III. Scattered over all Europe were to be found brave Irish generals, dexterous Irish diplomatists, Irish counts, Irish barons, Irish Knights of St. Louis and of St. Leopold, of the White Eagle and of the Golden Fleece, who, if they had remained in the house of bondage, could not have been ensigns of marching regiments, or freemen of petty corporations." Mr. Lecky may also be appealed to as a witness on the same remarkable fact: in his *History of England* he gives a long list of Irishmen who won for themselves the brightest laurels in every kingdom in Europe. "At home," he says, "the Irish Catholics had sunk into torpid and degraded pariahs. Abroad there was hardly a Catholic country where Irish exiles or their children might not be found in posts of dignity and honour. Lord Clare became Marshal of France. Browne, who was one of the very ablest Austrian generals, and who took a leading part in the first period of the Seven Years' War, was the son of Irish parents; and Maguire, Lacy, Nugent, and O'Donnell were all prominent generals in the Austrian service during the same war. Another Browne, a cousin of the Austrian Commander, was Field-Marshal in the Russian service and Governor of Riga. Peter Lacy, who also became a Russian Field-Marshal, and who earned the reputation of one of the first soldiers of his time, was of Irish birth. . . . Of the Dillons more than one obtained high rank in the French army, and one became Archbishop of Toulouse. The brave, the impetuous Lally, of Tollendal (his Irish name was O'Mullally), who served with such distinction at Dettingen and Fontenoy, and who for a time seriously threatened the English power in Hindostan, was son of a Galway gentleman, and member of an old Milesian family. Among Spanish generals, the names of O'Mahoney, O'Donnell, O'Gara, O'Reilly, and O'Neil, sufficiently attest their nationality, and an Irish Jacobite named Cammock was conspicuous among the admirals of Alberoni. Wall, who directed the Government of Spain with singular ability from 1754 to 1763,

was an Irishman, if not by birth at least by parentage. McGeoghegan was Chaplain of the Irish Brigade in the service of France. The physician of Sobieski, King of Poland, and the physician of Philip V. of Spain, were both Irish; and an Irish naturalist, named Bowles, was active in reviving the mining industry of Spain in 1752. In the diplomacy of the Continent Irish names are not unknown. Tyrconnel was French Ambassador at the Court of Berlin. Wall, before he became chief minister of Spain had represented that country at the Court of London. Lacy was Spanish Ambassador at Stockholm, and O'Mahony at Vienna."¹

It would not be difficult to add to the long list of distinguished Irishmen which Mr. Lecky thus presents to us. Dominick O'Daly and O'Driscoll should not be omitted among the most illustrious prelates of Spain and Italy; Viscount Taaffe may be named with distinction among the representatives of Austria at the British Court. Roger O'Connor of Belanagar held high posts in the Papal States, and died Governor of Civita Vecchia. And the honourable tradition has not been interrupted to our own days: the histories of France, Austria, and Spain shall cease to be written before the names of Taaffe and Nugent, of O'Donnell and McMahan, shall be forgotten.

¹ Lecky, *History*, ii. 263.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

Protestant Diocesan Schools in Ireland a failure—Royal Free Schools—Rules for Erasmus Smith's Schools—Bishop Pococke's Schools—Manifold material blessings promised in the Charter Schools—Elaborate scheme to destroy the children's faith—Seminaries of vice and irreligion—Protestant bishops and other petitioners regard them as the main hope of converting the Papists—Rich gifts and grants—Lord Chesterfield recommends the mask of friendship—Successive Viceroys commend the Charter Schools—Two reports to Propaganda on these schools—All Catholic children found begging, to be reared up Protestants—Decay of the Charter Schools—Howard's evidence—Government continues to patronize them—Their failure—The subsidiary Foundling Hospital—Meat soup on Fridays—Parliamentary inquiry—Terrible disclosures—All this was done to promote Protestantism—Lord Byron's speech—Conditions attached to the opening of Catholic Schools in 1782—And in 1792—Licence to open the Presentation Convent School in Kilkenny in 1801.

WHEN Henry the Eighth swept away 382 Irish monasteries and allotted to his courtiers and favourites all the endowments with which early piety had enriched them for purposes of education and religion, it was deemed expedient to establish some State schools in their stead. An Act of Parliament was passed allotting funds to the Protestant clergy for parochial or diocesan free schools. The funds were gratefully accepted by the clergy of the newly established Church, but no schools were erected. Fifty years later, in Elizabeth's reign, another Act of Parliament was passed and new grants were made to the Protestant clergy for the establishment of such schools; still not even the foundation of the schools were laid.

Another hundred years went on, and again the attention of Parliament was directed to these schools, but even then the order was only partially carried out. As regards the success of these schools suffice it to say that the Secretary to the Commissioners of Education reported to the Royal Commission in 1868, that "the whole system of Diocesan schools was perfectly and completely rotten."

Under James the First large grants from the confiscated princely estates of the Irish chieftains were made as endowments for Royal Free schools, of which the purpose was avowed to reclaim Irish youth from Popery to "Protestantism and good manners." After two centuries and a half, the Royal Commission of 1868, to which I have just referred, found that these schools had proved a source of vast wealth to some adventurous and unscrupulous headmasters, that no education had been given except to Protestants, and that only a remnant of the original rich endowments was still available for educational purposes.

There were also the schools of Erasmus Smith. This Cromwellian adventurer had outwitted his compeers and enriched himself at the expense of his brother Puritans, and to ward off inquiry into his ill-gotten goods, he volunteered to devote a great part of his landed property to educate and reform the Irish Papists. By special rules the schoolmaster in these schools was bound to teach the Protestant version of the Scriptures to the Irish children, and to make them recite prayers with him, and learn Ussher's Catechism. Erasmus Smith lived long enough to witness the failure of his schools. In 1682 he wrote to the Governors of these schools: "My Lords, my design is not to reflect upon any one, only I give my judgement why those schools are so consumptive, which was, and is, and will be if not prevented, the many Popish schools, their neighbours, which, as suckers, do starve the tree." There were not a few other schools, such as Bishop Foy's school in Waterford, the Ormonde classical schools, and the Pococke school, all, under various pretences of benevolence, having for their object

to bring to the Protestant tenets the children of the Irish poor. The last-named school was in the neighbourhood of Kilkenny, and by the will of its founder, Bishop Pococke, its endowments were to be devoted "to bring up young Irish papists to Protestantism and the linen trade."

But, perhaps, better than any others, the Charter Schools will serve to illustrate the matter now before us. These schools brought with them the promise of manifold material blessings to the Irish people. Knowledge was to be imparted, industry promoted, the well-being and comfort of the children provided for, their success in after-life secured. So attractive was the programme of this educational scheme, so perfect in its minutest details, that Mr. Froude does not hesitate to write that "the Charter Schools were the best-conceived educational institutions which existed in the world";¹ and that "ingenuity could have devised no better gift to impoverished Ireland."² It was proposed in these schools to impart an industrial education. A farm was attached to each establishment for practical instruction in agriculture. Trades of all kinds were to be carried on within the walls. The children were to be furnished with knowledge and skill to enable them to become useful and enlightened members of society. When their school teaching was finished they were apprenticed at the public expense, and when they had served their time they received further assistance to start them in their career of usefulness. These were only a few of the material advantages offered to the children of the Irish poor by the Charter Schools. Underlying all this, however, was an elaborately devised plot to destroy the Catholic faith of these poor children, and to set up amid an oppressed and impoverished people, a permanent gigantic system of proselytism. All the children admitted to the Charter Schools were to be brought up Protestants. On entering these schools the names

¹ Froude, *The English in Ireland*, ii. 450.

² *Ibid.* ii. 451.

of the children were changed, so that their parents and friends could not be able to influence them. They were transferred from place to place, the better to remove them from every association of their holy faith. Special catechisms were composed for their use, full of the vilest calumnies against the Catholic Church. When the children quitted the school, they served their time with Protestants; they had to marry Protestants. Such were the schools that promised to educate the Irish people "in pure religion and loyalty"; but which, almost from the outset, became seminaries of discord, rancour, vice, and irreligion.

However, nothing that Government could do was left undone to ensure their success. The petition presented to the King in 1730, praying for a Charter of incorporation for these schools, was signed by the Lord Chancellor Wyndham, by the Protestant Primate Boulter, by fifteen Protestant archbishops and bishops, and by one hundred and twenty-five others, including the judges and all the chief nobility of the kingdom. The petition thus signed sets forth that "in many parts of the kingdom there are great tracts of mountainy and coarse land, of ten, twenty, and thirty miles in length, and of a considerable breadth, almost universally inhabited by Papists—that the generality of the Popish natives appear to have very little sense or knowledge of religion, but what they implicitly take from their clergy—among the ways proper to be taken for the converting and civilizing of these poor deluded people and bringing them in time to be good Christians and faithful subjects, one of the most necessary, and without which all others are likely to prove ineffectual, has always been thought to be, that a sufficient number of English Protestant schools be erected and established, wherein the children of the Irish natives might be instructed in the English tongue, and the fundamental principles of true religion." Primate Boulter was the chief promoter of this educational scheme, and commending it to the Bishop of London, he avows his motive to be that "The great number of Papists in this

kingdom and the obstinacy with which they adhere to their own religion, occasions us trying what may be done with their children, to bring them over to our Church" (Letter of May 5, 1730). The desired Charter was granted by the Crown in 1733, and for one hundred years nothing that power, and wealth, and patronage could accomplish was omitted to give success to these proselytizing schools. Parliamentary grants were made from year to year, commencing with £1,000, and gradually increasing until they attained the annual sum of £40,000. Princely donations were received from the nobility in England and Ireland, and other friends of the cause, and large tracts of land granted by the Crown and corporations gave promise to them of permanent success. In 1751, 1753, and 1755, the Charter Schools were specially commended by the Lord Lieutenant at the opening of the Sessions of Parliament. The Duke of Bedford, in like manner, in 1757, asked the Parliament, to "consider the state of the Charter Schools, and what further steps might be taken to strengthen the Protestant interest."

A remarkable letter of the Earl of Chesterfield, addressed in 1757 to Dr. Chevenix, Protestant Bishop of Waterford, shows that the astute statesman of England did not hesitate to recommend the Protestant dignitaries in Ireland to assume the mask of friendship in their dealings with the Irish Catholics, the better to ensure the success of the Charter Schools. He thus writes: "Some time or other, though God knows when, it will be found out in Ireland that the Popish religion and influence cannot be subdued by force, but may be undermined and destroyed by art. Allow the Papists to buy lands, let and take leases equally with the Protestants, but subject to the Gavel Act, which will always have its effect upon their posterity at least. Tie them down to the Government by the tender but strong bonds of landed property, which the Pope will have much ado to dissolve, notwithstanding his power of loosening and binding. Use those who come over to you, though

perhaps only seemingly at first, well and kindly, instead of looking for their cloven feet and their tails as you do now. Increase both your number and your care of the Protestant Charter Schools. Make your Penal Laws extremely mild, and then put them strictly in execution. *Hæ tibi erunt artes.*"

The Earl of Halifax, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, at the opening of George the Third's reign (1760), addressing the assembled members of the Legislature, said: "There is no object more worthy of your attention than the Protestant Charter Schools. Notwithstanding the peaceable demeanour of the Papists in this kingdom, it must always be your duty and interest to divert from error by every effectual though gentle method the deluded followers of a blind religion." In *Debates Relative to the Affairs of Ireland in the years 1763 and 1764*, published in London in 1766, it is recorded that on Tuesday, October 11, 1763, the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Northumberland, opened the Parliamentary Session in Dublin. After congratulating the House of Commons on the general condition of the kingdom, he referred to "the only displeasing circumstance" which had occurred since he assumed the reins of office, and this was "the tumultuous risings of the lower people, in contempt of laws and of magistracy and of every constitutional subordination." He added that no means could "serve so effectually to prevent these disorders for the future as the encouragement of such institutions as tended to impress on the minds of the lower order of people early habits of industry and true principles of religion: for this purpose your Protestant Charter Schools were established, to which I therefore recommend the continuance of your care." The Earl of Buckinghamshire opened Parliament in 1777 with a speech in which he declared that the Protestant Charter Schools were educating the Irish people "in sound principles." The Earl of Carlisle in 1781 again commended them to Parliament: "The humanity and wisdom of those motives which influence your support

of the Protestant Charter Schools as seminaries of true religion and honest industry will continue to engage your regard." In October, 1783, Lord Northington expressed himself to the like effect: "The Protestant Charter Schools, an institution founded in wisdom and humanity, are most eminently entitled to your care." So also the Duke of Rutland at the opening of the Parliamentary Session in 1785, conveyed the thanks of the Government for the liberality which they had shown "to the Protestant Charter Schools."

Thus, year after year new patronage and support were extended to these institutions. Such persistent efforts, backed by all the power and wealth of the State, to force these schools upon the country, and through them to corrupt the faith of the Irish children, excited no little alarm for some years among the friends of Ireland, the more so as the Catholic bishops and clergy were quite unprovided with any means to counteract them. The Rev. John Murphy, a priest of the diocese of Dublin, presented to the Congregation of Propaganda, as early as the year 1743, a report on the working of these schools, in which he gave the following details: Children, he said, were not admitted to the Charter Schools under six or over ten years. On entering the school their name was changed, so that their parents or friends could have no communication with them. The children of one province were after a short time transferred to another province, that their isolation might be the more complete. Large premiums were given to such children as showed most proficiency in the Protestant Catechism, which was specially composed for their use, and was filled with the bitterest invectives and calumnies against the Catholic Church. They were apprenticed for seven years, but only to Protestant masters and mistresses, and during their apprenticeship they were obliged to conform in every way to the tenets of the Protestant Church. After their apprenticeship a dower of £5 was given to each child, but again a condition was added that they should marry a Protestant under the approval of the directors of

the schools. Though only ten years had passed since the Charter had been granted, already 47 schools were established, with 1,400 children on the rolls, besides many hundreds of others who had already begun to serve their apprenticeship. The Catholics (the report adds) were without any human resource to combat this vast scheme of proselytism. In the schools privately supported by the Catholics of Dublin there were only 400 children, besides 200 others who had been placed at service, and all depended wholly upon the charity of the faithful. Many of these Catholic children, Father Murphy adds, had been rescued by their parents or friends from the Charter Schools, being discovered, after tedious searching and travelling, in distant parts of the kingdom.

Another priest, named Joseph Kelly, also from Dublin, repeats these details in 1749. He further writes that, according to the census made in 1745, the whole population of Ireland was 2,010,221, the Catholics being only 1,309,768, and the Protestants of various denominations numbering 700,453. The number, however, of heretics and bad Catholics, he adds, was daily on the increase, mainly on account of the proselytizing schools.

As early as the year 1749 it was enacted by Parliament that all poor Catholic children found begging were to be seized and reared up Protestants in the Charter Schools. That their revenues might be devoted entirely to the work of proselytism, it was resolved that none but Catholic children would be admitted to them. Nevertheless the Charter Schools proved a failure. Even Mr. Froude acknowledges that "the industrial training in these schools degenerated by negligence into a system in which the children became the slaves of the masters and grew up in rags and starvation."¹ He adds that "the wreck of trade and the disorganization of labour destroyed the apprentice system. The masters and mistresses plundered the funds, starved the

children, and made the industrial system an excuse for using the pupils as slaves to fill their own pockets."

The first person to throw some light on the Charter Schools was the benevolent Howard, the great reformer of the prisons, who visited a number of these schools in the year 1784, and reported so unfavourably of them that three years later a Parliamentary inquiry was ordered. He did not hesitate to describe them in his report, as "a disgrace to the kingdom." He instanced one school, in which several of the children had been inmates for five years, yet few of them could read, not one of them could write; of another school he reports that it was remarkable for "an excessive parsimony in linen, soap, and other things necessary for cleanliness"; in others he found the children "half-starved and almost naked"; and, on the whole, he declared that the inmates of the Charter Schools were "unhealthy, in rags, totally uneducated, and in all respects shamefully neglected." In his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, he was equally emphatic in his condemnation of these schools: "the children in general were sickly," he said, "pale, and such miserable objects, that they were a disgrace to all society" (Stephen's *Inquiry*, p. 107, *seqq.*).

One of Howard's statements is particularly remarkable. The Charter Schools had been established to promote Protestantism, the result, however, had been far otherwise; the condition of the schools, says this illustrious philanthropist, "is so deplorable as to disgrace Protestantism and to encourage Popery in Ireland" (Howard, *On Prisons*, p. 208). He further added that these schools professed to be scriptural and literary; nevertheless in one large school, out of twenty boys belonging to the head classes, varying from thirteen to fifteen years of age, he found that seventeen of them had never heard of St. Paul, and half of them had no idea whether the name "Europe" referred to a man or a place.

Notwithstanding these disclosures, the Charter Schools continued for forty years longer to be patronized by the Crown, and to receive increased grants from Parlia-

ment. The curse of sterility however was upon them, and neither their moral condition nor their results as proselytizing institutions were found to improve. In 1819, they were officially inspected by a Protestant clergyman, Rev. Mr. Lee: he reported that the schools had failed, and that the children in them in too many cases were "stunted in body, mind, and heart." Another Protestant writer, in his *Views of Ireland* (London, 1823), stated that "the Charter Schools have filled Ireland with vice and dissension. They have been the fruitful source of enmities, prejudices, and immoralities." A more recent semi-official work on the Charter Schools pronounces against them the following terrible verdict: "There is no form or shade of conceivable vice that did not abound in these infamous proselytizing institutions" (*Irish Education*, p. 149).

Surely this is bad enough, and yet I have not said all. Subsidiary to the Charter Schools was another institution, known as the Foundling Hospital. The head house was in Dublin, and it had branches in Cork and other parts of the country. Special Parliamentary grants were made for its support, and it numbered no less than three hundred peers and gentlemen among its governors. It received about 2,000 infant children every year. All were to be brought up Protestants, and when of sufficient age were to be transferred to swell the ranks of the apostates in the Charter Schools. One of the rules of this Foundling Institution will sufficiently show the spirit that pervaded it. Meat soup was provided for the inmates on Fridays and fast-days; and should the children refuse to partake of it, as not unfrequently happened, it was poured down their throats against their will. For fifty years this institution pursued a reckless career, unchecked and unobserved. It was not till the year 1791 that a Parliamentary inquiry was ordered. The details then brought to light were so terrible that they would appear incredible were they not attested on oath and officially registered by no unfriendly hands in the Journals of the Irish House of Commons. It was

found that in 1790, the year immediately preceding the inquiry, 2,187 children had been admitted into the Institution; of all these only one hundred now survived. Nor was this an exceptional case. During the ten preceding years, more than 19,000 children had been admitted: and of these 17,000 had died. How was this terrible mortality to be accounted for? It was found that the infants were forwarded on carts to Dublin, and it was usual to throw ten or twelve of them together into a kish or basket: so bruised were they at the journey's end that frequently half of them were taken out dead and flung into the dungheap. A member of the House of Commons declared at the close of the proceedings, that of all the tales he had ever read or heard of, the statements made in this inquiry were the most horrible and ghastly (*Irish Debates*, March 12, 1792).

Nevertheless no remedy was applied. In 1797 I find it avowed in Parliament that the Foundling Institution was administered as heretofore. Out of 540 children admitted during the first three months of 1796, only 67 now survived, the rest having perished through negligence or ill-treatment. As usual, this loss of life was concealed, and only three of these deaths had been entered on the books. No medical advice or assistance was ever administered to the children thus doomed to die. The only medicine used was a soothing draught, which was found to be a slow poison. A member of Parliament when moving for further inquiry stated that he had personally inspected the Institution in Dublin, and in one instance had found eighteen infants thrust away into a garret to die (*Irish Debates*, April 12, 1797). All this was done, the better to promote Protestantism in Ireland, and this martyrdom of Irish Catholic children was allowed to go on unchecked for several years; till at length the patrons of these Institutions, not moved by any sense of justice, but compelled by public feeling and through very shame, consigned them, with every mark of infamy, to a dishonoured grave.

Lord Byron in his speech in Parliament on the motion of the Earl of Donoughmore for a Committee on the Roman Catholic claims, made many remarks on the Penal Laws, but I here specially refer to his words as illustrating the character of the Charter Schools. "Are the laws," he said, "passed in favour of the Catholics observed? No; they are rendered nugatory in trivial as in serious cases. By a late Act, Catholic chaplains are permitted in jails, but in Fermanagh county the grand jury lately persisted in presenting a suspended clergyman for the office, thereby evading the statute, notwithstanding the most pressing remonstrances of a most respectable magistrate, named Fletcher, to the contrary. Such is law, such is justice, for the happy, free, contented Catholic!"

"It has been asked in another place: Why do not the rich Catholics endow foundations for the education of the priesthood? Why do you not permit them to do so? Why are all such bequests subject to the interference, the vexatious, arbitrary, peculating interference of the Orange Commissioners for Charitable Donations? As to Maynooth College, in no instance, except at the time of its foundation, when a noble Lord [Camden] at the head of the Irish administration did appear to interest himself in its advancement, and during the government of a noble Duke [Bedford], who, like his ancestors, has ever been the friend of freedom and mankind, and who has not so far adopted the selfish policy of the day as to exclude the Catholics from the number of his fellow creatures—with these exceptions, in no instance has that institution been properly encouraged. There was indeed a time when the Catholic clergy were conciliated, while the Union was pending—that Union which could not be carried without them—while their assistance was requisite in procuring addresses from the Catholic counties; then they were cajoled and caressed, and given to understand that 'the Union would do everything'; but the moment it was passed, they were driven back with contempt into their former obscurity.

In the conduct pursued towards Maynooth College everything is done to irritate and perplex—everything is done to efface the slightest impression of gratitude from the Catholic mind; the very hay made upon the lawn, the fat and tallow of the beef and mutton allowed, must be paid for and accounted for upon oath. As a contrast, however, to this beggarly benevolence, let us look at the Protestant Charter Schools; to them you have lately granted £40,000; thus are they supported, and how are they recruited? Montesquieu observes on the English Constitution that the model may be found in Tacitus, where the historian describes the policy of the Germans, and adds, ‘this beautiful system was taken from the woods’; so in speaking of the Charter Schools, it may be observed, that this beautiful system was taken from the gypsies. These schools are recruited in the same manner as the Janissaries in the time of their enrolment under Amurath, and the gypsies of the present day—with stolen children, with children decoyed and kidnapped from their Catholic connections by their rich and powerful Protestant neighbours; this is notorious, and one instance may suffice to show in what manner. The sister of a Mr. McCarthy (a Catholic gentleman of very considerable property) died, leaving two girls, who were immediately marked out as proselytes, and conveyed to the Charter School of Coolgreny; their uncle, on being apprised of the fact, which took place during his absence, applied for the restitution of his nieces, offering to settle an independence on these his relations; his request was refused, and not till after five years’ struggle, and the interference of very high authority, could this Catholic gentleman obtain back his nearest of kindred from a charity Charter School. In this manner are proselytes obtained and mingled with the offspring of such Protestants as may avail themselves of the institution. And how are they taught? A catechism is put into their hands, consisting of, I believe, forty-five pages, in which are three questions relative to the Protestant religion. One of these queries is: ‘Where

was the Protestant religion before Luther?' Answer: 'In the Gospel.' The remaining forty-four pages and a half regard the damnable idolatry of Papists. Allow me to ask our spiritual pastors and masters, is this training up a child in the way which he should go? Better would be it to send them anywhere than to teach them such doctrines; better send them to those islands in the South Seas where they might more humanely learn to become cannibals; it would be less disgusting that they were brought up to devour the dead than prosecute the living. Schools do you call them? Call them rather dunghills, where the viper of intolerance deposits her young; that when their teeth are cut, and their poison is mature, they may issue forth, filthy and venomous, to sting the Catholic."

The Penal Laws regarding Catholic education were for the first time relaxed by Parliament in 1782. An Act was passed in that year allowing "Papists to teach school," but two remarkable clauses were added: 1st, that they should teach "Papist children only"; and 2nd, that this privilege of teaching school was not to be exercised "except with the licence of the Protestant Bishop of the diocese in which such school was to be held." Catholic schools were soon opened in various parts of the country, and within a few years there were Catholic academies in Belfast, Strabane, Carlow, and Kilkenny. Ten years later a further relaxation took place. By an Act of Parliament in 1792, any Catholic who took the prescribed oath of allegiance could compel the magistrate or Protestant Diocesan authority to grant him the necessary licence as teacher. The humiliating condition of having to apply to the Protestant authorities for permission to open a Catholic school continued in force down to the present century, and though the permission could not be refused, it was always granted in the most offensive terms. As a specimen of these licences, we present to the reader the official permission granted to the Superior of the Presentation Convent in Kilkenny in 1801, transcribed from the original parch-

ment document: "By the tenor of these presents, We, Hugh, by Divine permission Lord Bishop of Ossory, send Greetings to Isabella McLoughlin of the Parish of St. Mary, in our said Diocese. Whereas you are sufficiently recommended unto us as a proper person to keep school within our said Diocese for the education and instruction of Papists or persons professing the Popish Religion. We do therefore by these presents give and grant unto you full leave and Licence to keep and teach a school within the said Parish during our Will and pleasure only, for the Education and Instruction of Children of Popish Parents only, you having first produced to us a certificate of your having taken the Oath of allegiance and declaration prescribed to be taken by Law. In Testimony whereof We have caused the seal of our Constitutional Court of Ossory to be hereunto affixed the twenty-fifth day of May In the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and one. (Seal) Paul Helsham, Vicar-General."

Such was the liberty enjoyed by Irish Catholics in the matter of education, as late as the beginning of the present century.

CHAPTER THE NINTH

Succession of bishops and priests unbroken in Ireland—Eloquent words of John Mitchell—Penalties against the clergy—Statistics of population—Number of clergy—And of schools—Latin taught in the hedge schools—Knowledge of the classics and literature kept alive by the clergy—Words of Rev. Charles O'Connor—Study of the Irish language cultivated at Belanagare—Some particulars regarding Dr. O'Rourke, Bishop of Killalla—Seminary organised by Christopher Butler, Archbishop of Cashel—Another flourishing school in Dublin—Carried on by Fr. Betagh—Similar schools opened by Dr. McMullan in Down and Connor—The clergy, for the most part, educated on the Continent—Words of Right Rev. Dr. Healy—Viceregal proclamation to prevent communication with the Continent—Dangers that beset the students—Sometimes shipped as sailors—Testimony of Fr. Howling—Precarious means of subsistence—Students generally ordained priests before proceeding to college—A commendatory letter—Sympathy with Irish students on the Continent in 1794—College at Lisbon—And at Salamanca—Royal letter to the university—College at Seville—Other Spanish colleges—Three Irish Colleges in Louvain—Interesting account of the college at Lisle.

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE and not a few other hostile writers on Irish history in modern times have asked in astonishment how it was that, despite the tempest of persecution which swept over Ireland from the dawn of the Reformation down to the close of the eighteenth century, the Irish Church preserved her unbroken line of bishops and priests to hand on the traditions of the faith and to minister to her faithful people. The reply is given by John Mitchell, and I cite his words the more readily because they present an accurate picture of the

fearless devotedness and unparalleled heroism of the Catholic clergy of Ireland in those perilous days. He thus writes : "The matter, and perhaps the only matter, which disquiets and perplexes the mind of Mr. Froude is the fact that, in the midst of the horrors of oppression, Catholic priests were not only ministering all over the country, but coming in from France and Spain and Rome ; not only supplying the vacuum made by transportation and by death, but keeping up steadily the needful communication between the Irish Church and its head ; and not only coming, but going (both times incurring the risk of capital punishment), and not in commodious steamships, which did not then exist, but in small fishing luggers or schooners ; not as first-class passengers, but as men before the mast. Archbishops worked their passage. The whole of this strange phenomenon belongs to an order of facts which never entered into the 'historian's' theory of human nature. It is a factor in the account that he can find no place for ; he gives it up. Yet Edmund Spenser, long before his day, as good a Protestant as Froude, and an undertaker, too, upon Irish confiscated estates, who had at least somewhat of the poetic vision and the poetic soul, in certain moods of his undertaking mind could look upon such strange beings as these priests with a species of awe, if not with full comprehension. He much marvels at the zeal of these men, 'which is a greater wonder to see how they spare not to come out of Spain, from Rome, and from Remes, by long toyle and dangerous travayling hither, where they know perill of death awayteth them and no reward or richesse.' Mr. Froude, indeed, speaks of them as engaged in nothing else but keeping up treasonable alliances with countries at war with England, and recruiting foreign armies. As for their expecting 'no reward or richesse' for such laborious service, he would bid you tell that to the horse marines !

" 'Reward or richesse !' I knew the spots within my own part of Ireland, where venerable archbishops hid

themselves as it were in the hole of a rock. In a remote part of Louth county, near the base of the Few's Mountains, is a retired nook called Ballymascanlon, where dwelt for years, in a farm-house which would attract no attention, the Primate of Ireland and successor of St. Patrick, Bernard MacMahon, a prelate accomplished in all the learning of his time, and assiduous in the government of his archdiocese ; but he moved with danger, if not with fear, and often encountered hardships travelling by day and by night. . . . Imagine a priest ordained at Seville or Salamanca, a gentleman of high old name, a man of eloquence and genius, who had sustained disputations in the College halls on questions of literature or theology ; imagine him on the quays of Brest, treating with the skipper of some vessel to let him work his passage. He wears tarry breeches and a tarpaulin hat, for disguise was generally needful. He flings himself on board, takes his full part in all hard work, scarce feels the cold spray and the tempest. And he knows, too, that the end of it all for him may be a row of sugar-canes to hoe under the blazing sun of Barbadoes, overlooked by a broad-hatted agent of a British planter ; yet he goes eagerly to meet his fate, for he carries in his hand a sacred deposit, bears in his heart a sacred message, and must deliver it or die. Imagine him then springing ashore and repairing to seek the bishop of the diocese in some cave or behind some hedge, but proceeding with caution by reason of the priest-catchers and other wolf-dogs. But Froude would say, this is the ideal priest you have been portraying. No, it is the real priest, as he existed and acted at that day, and as he would again, in the like emergency. And is there nothing admirable in all this ? Is there nothing human and sublime ? Ah ! we Protestants are certainly most enlightened creatures. Mr. Froude says we are the salt of the earth. We stand, each of us, with triumphant conceit upon the sacred and inalienable rights of private stupidity, but I should like to see our excellent Protestantism produce fruit like this."

It is not to be supposed that the filling up of the ranks of the priesthood was a matter of indifference to the Government in those days. On the contrary, the most stringent Penal Laws were enacted, with the express intent of preventing the succession of pastors, and of extinguishing, if possible, the Irish priesthood; and those laws were carried out with relentless severity.

Indeed, it may be said that the extirpation of the Catholic clergy was the main object of most of the sanguinary laws enacted under William III. and Queen Anne. Privation of property and exclusion from office and from every honourable position in society, besides a thousand vexations and petty annoyances, awaited the wealthier classes of the laity. A far severer fate, however, was in store for the clergy. Not only was the exercise of the sacred ministry forbidden, but to be a priest was reckoned a crime subject to imprisonment and exile, and should the culprit return from his exile to his native land, he incurred by the very fact the penalties of treason.

Before the middle of the century the proportion of Catholics in the population had considerably diminished. In the year 1672, according to the official census of Sir William Petty, the whole population of Ireland was 1,100,000, the Catholics numbering 800,000, and the Protestants 300,000. An exact enumeration was again made in 1731, when the total population was reckoned at 2,010,221, the Catholics being 1,309,768, and the Protestants 700,453. Vast numbers of Catholics had fallen victims to famine and pestilence, others had sought a home on the Continent. The Protestant primate Boulter, attested in 1727 that few Catholics became Protestants; on the contrary, he says, "We lose many of ours, the descendants of Cromwell's officers and soldiers here having gone off to Popery." Twenty-one years later, though the population was 2,317,584, De Burgo was of opinion that the number of Catholics had not increased.

An official census was made in 1776, which gave the following returns:—

				PROTESTANTS.	CATHOLICS.
Connaught...	...	...	...	23,718	246,142
Leinster ...	...	...	...	214,173	474,863
Munster ...	...	...	...	134,061	491,738
Ulster ...	...	...	...	379,217	194,602
Totals ...				751,169	1,407,345

As regards the Catholic clergy, it was estimated in the year 1698 that there were in Ireland 892 of the secular clergy and 495 of the various religious orders. When the registration of the clergy was made in 1704, the total number of parochial clergy officially recognized was 1,080. Despite the efforts subsequently made to exterminate them, it was found in the year 1731, by the official returns ordered by the House of Lords, that there were in the kingdom 1,445 of the secular clergy, with several bishops, besides 254 friars. The same official returns further showed that there were in Ireland in that year 9 nunneries, 664 Mass-houses, and 54 private chapels, not counting "huts, sheds, and movable altars," and 549 Popish schools. In the preface to the official report of these returns, reprinted in London in 1747, the hope is expressed that the Charter Schools and "the due execution of the laws against the Popish clergy will in the next age root out that pestilent, restless, and idolatrous religion." The fidelity of the clergy to their religion had indeed been most remarkable, considering the terrible hardships to which they were exposed and the harassing proclamations constantly issued against them. "It is very observable," writes Rev. Charles O'Connor, "that of the 1,080 priests in the kingdom in 1704, banished into bogs, deprived of all the comforts of life and almost every intercourse with the human species, not more than a dozen abandoned their principles to avoid persecution, or to accept the £40 which was held out to them as an inducement to apostasy."

It will not be uninteresting now to set forth in some detail the means by which the succession of pastors was maintained in the Irish Church. Her colleges and

monasteries and every other institution that might be regarded as a training school for the priesthood were swept away. In most parts of the country it was only in the hedge schools and in the hiding places of the clergy that classical studies could be attended to, and yet it was more than once reported to the Government that the barefooted lads on the hills of Connemara or in the bogs of Leinster could converse with more fluency in the classic language of Latium than the pampered scholars of Oxford and Cambridge.

In the Irish House of Commons, in the year 1764, Sir James Caldwell, whilst opposing the smallest relaxation of the Penal Laws, bitterly complained that there was scarcely a Popish family in Ireland but had some relative who was either a priest, or enlisted in a foreign army, or engaged in trade in France or Spain; and that their children were "all taught Latin in the hedge schools, which were scattered throughout the southern parts of the kingdom, in order to qualify for foreign service."

Smith, in his *History of Kerry*, confirms the accuracy of this statement, and adds that "classical reading extends itself, even to a fault, among the lower orders in Ireland, many of whom have a greater knowledge in this way than some of the better sort in other places." O'Halloran also writes that "where these schools are in greatest repute, the people have least communication with the adjacent plains, and speak only Irish."

Besides these hedge schools, scattered through the wildest parts of the kingdom, we find that an accurate knowledge of the classics and of the higher branches of literature was kept alive by the persecuted clergy, who, compelled to wander from house to house, in return for the shelter afforded them, imparted such instruction as was within their reach to the children of their host. In the very rare *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Charles O'Connor, of Belanagare*, by Rev. Charles O'Connor, printed in Dublin in 1796, a faithful picture is presented

of the manifold educational difficulties which beset even the highest Catholic families, and of the exceptional manner in which the work of education devolved on the clergy in those days. "To have a fair view of the native Irish," the author thus writes, "during the reigns of the two first Georges, we must follow their nobility and gentry in their exile to those countries where they were allowed to exercise their abilities. There we will find them, whether in an ecclesiastical, military, or mercantile capacity, triumphing over indigence and rivalling the most illustrious geniuses of France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, without riches to command notice or patronage to create esteem. But when we turn an unwilling eye from those splendid scenes of action to the country that gave those heroes an existence, and, instead of agriculture encroaching on the desert, we see wastes and bogs overspreading fields that once were alive with population and abundance, the heart sickens at the dreary prospect, and finds but a wretched place of repose in this wilderness of stupidity, at a few gloomy convents, where barefooted scholars were taught by poor simple friars to translate into Irish the poetry of Homer and Virgil, and the eloquence of Cicero and Demosthenes. Such were the wretched asylums of learning from which Mr. O'Connor had his earliest instructions. The first who put a Latin grammar into his hands was a poor friar of the convent of Crieqliagh, in the county of Sligo, who could scarcely speak a word of English; and I find by a memorandum of his written in Irish (dated September 30, 1729) that this event happened precisely September 30, 1718, when he was eight years old. He spent some years at his father's house under the occasional tuition of this Crieqliagh friar, from whom all he learned was a little Irish, which he was taught to read and write grammatically, and to pronounce with the accent and accuracy of the ancients. This was the sum of his knowledge in 1724, when he was fourteen years of age, and was put under the tuition of another clergyman, who obliged him to translate some

school-books into barbarous English and Irish alternately. What progress he could make in this manner it is easy to conjecture, especially when we reflect that the Roman Catholic clergymen of those days could seldom remain more than one night in any one place, on account of the severe proclamations issued against them. It was to a fortuitous event he was indebted for the progress he made afterwards in his studies. A (Rev.) Mr. O'Rourke, his maternal uncle, was introduced at Vienna to Prince Eugene of Savoy, as the son of Captain Tiernan O'Rourke, of whose bravery and misfortunes he was himself a witness. The prince appointed this (Rev.) gentleman his chaplain and domestic secretary. But soon after, in 1701,¹ to gratify the wishes of his persecuted countrymen, he was appointed Bishop of Killalla, in Ireland."

The author then refers to this worthy bishop being forced to take refuge in Belanagare, and adds that to him "Mr. O'Connor was indebted for being put on a better plan of studies and fortified in his early days with principles which enabled him to encounter with resignation the calamities of the times in which it was his misfortune to be born. The bishop obliged him to copy the most beautiful passages from the best English authors, to translate the classics into chaste English, to compare his translation with that of those who had succeeded better than himself; to commit to memory select passages from the most approved writers, ancient and modern, &c. Nor would the good bishop allow him to neglect the study of the Irish language; one day when he had succeeded very happily in describing (in English) to a friend in Vienna the miseries of the old Irish, a task pointed out to him by the bishop, he told him he would never more write in Irish, since he had succeeded so well in English. 'No,' said the other, 'what you have once learned you must never forget, and you shall not go to rest until you translate the psalm

¹ This is, I presume, a misprint for 1707, which was the date of Dr. O'Rourke's appointment to the See of Killalla.

Miserere into Irish.' He complied, and his translation is superior to Bedel's, and to any I ever saw. Carolan (the last of the Irish bards), who was present when it was read by the bishop, and who with all his faults was at all times very devout, burst into a flood of tears on hearing it read in a solemn, affecting voice, and it was on this occasion that, taking his harp in a fit of rapturous affection for the family of Belanagare, he swept along the strings in a sudden fit his 'Donagha Cahill-oig,' singing extempore the fall of the Milesian race, the hospitality of old Denis O'Connor (the master of the house), and his greatness of soul, which in the midst of crosses and calamities harboured that very night in his house a crowd of reduced gentlemen, and hired a number of harpers to strike up a solemn concert at midnight Mass (for it was Christmas eve) and a dancing master, a fencing master, and an Irish master for the instruction and polite education of his children. It was thus that Mr. O'Connor inherited from his infancy that enthusiastic patriotism which is so conspicuous in all his writings, as well as that partiality for the harp which, in memory of Old Carolan, he retained to the day of his death." This remarkable Christmas eve scene must be referred to the year 1726. In the following year, O'Connor, being now a great proficient in the Irish language, proceeded to Dublin to pursue the higher branches of literature. He had then for his tutor the Rev. Walter Skelton, a Catholic priest, who, we are told, unfolded to him the beauties of Virgil and Horace, Homer and Demosthenes, and among other higher studies "showed him the cause of the variety of the seasons, of the inequality of days and nights, the wonders of vision, the nature of fluids, and the order of the universe."

The interesting work from which we have gleaned these pictures of Irish Catholic life in the beginning of the eighteenth century adds a few details regarding the devoted bishop, Dr. O'Rourke. Notwithstanding the many terrors of the persecution which repeatedly

gathered around him, he remained unflinchingly at his post throughout the whole episcopate of twenty-eight years. In a letter to a friend in Rome the bishop stated "that the Roman Catholics trembled at the idea of writing a letter; that when they wrote they wrote in Irish, and that he risked his life by posting a letter for Rome, though it regarded only his pastoral care and spiritual concerns." When a fresh storm of persecution fell upon the Irish Church in 1732, and a severe proclamation was issued against the Catholic clergy, Dr. O'Rourke retired from Belanagare, and sought a secure refuge in the wilds of Connemara. The faithful around Belanagare had no one for a considerable time to celebrate Holy Mass but a poor old priest named Prendergast, "who before day-dawn on Sundays crept into a cave in the parish of Baslick, and waited there for his congregation in the cold and wet weather, hunger and thirst, to preach to them patience under their afflictions, and perseverance in their principles; to offer up prayers for their persecutors and to arm them with resignation to do the will of Heaven in their misfortunes. This cave is called *Poll-an-Aifrin*, or Mass Cave, to this day, and is a melancholy monument of the piety of our ancestors." The bishop returned to Belanagare in 1724, and died there in the following year of a disease "contracted by sleeping sometimes in the open air, and sometimes in miserable hovels, among the bogs and shaking marshes of Connemara. Such was the end of a man who had conversed with kings and emperors, and passed his early years in affluence and ease. Mr. O'Connor ordered the following epitaph to be engraved on his tombstone:—

"Sola salus servire Deo,
Sunt cætera fraudes."
("But serve thy God, here all thy duty lies,
All else is fraud, but this is to be wise.")

To this narrative of Rev. Charles O'Connor I will only add that in one of the official documents of Propaganda this worthy Bishop O'Rourke is styled a Franciscan.

From time to time, as circumstances permitted, a few schools were secretly held for the special education of the fervent youths who, despite so many impending dangers, would aspire to the service of the sanctuary.

Dr. Christopher Butler, Archbishop of Cashel, was one of the first in those evil days of persecution to organize such a special school, or seminary, as it may be justly styled. This illustrious prelate was the son of Walter Butler, of Kilcash, and was born in the family mansion at Garryricken, in the County Kilkenny, on January 18, 1673. He pursued his studies at the Sorbonne, in Paris, and was consecrated Archbishop of Cashel at Rome on the 18th of October, 1712. The learned De Burgo gives the following sketch of his subsequent career: "He presided over the archiepiscopal See of Cashel for a period of forty-five years, on which he conferred many benefits by his sound teaching and exemplary life, being remarkable for humility, meekness, and other virtues, whereby he may be said to have preached constantly to the people; a prelate, in a word, who for learning and virtue might justly be compared to the bishops of the golden age of the Church." Another writer adds that "he died as he lived, in the opinion of sanctity, in the eighty-fourth year of his age, on the 4th of September, and was buried in the family tomb at Kilcash, September 16, 1747." He appears to have inaugurated his ecclesiastical school in the very beginning of his episcopate. The students lodged in approved farmers' houses, and came together at stated times and places to receive the necessary instruction in Christian doctrine and the practices of piety. The following account was written by the Archbishop's coadjutor, and subsequently successor in the See, about the year 1752: "To restore to some extent at least the old seminaries, and to send as many labourers as possible, having regard to the critical circumstances in which the country was placed, into the vineyard, and moved thereto, no doubt, by the grace of God, he established a seminary about forty years ago for the benefit of ecclesiastical students

of his own diocese, over which he himself presided by word and example during his lifetime. The institution brought forth the choicest fruits. A large number of ecclesiastics, distinguished for piety and learning, were thus ordained, and for many years past the priests educated at Cashel were called by the people *saints*. Indeed, it is manifest that the archbishop ascribed many of the evils which widely prevailed to the want of vigilance in guarding the entrance to the Church from the intrusion of unworthy pastors. Hence, watching always with the greatest care over the interests of this little seminary, he entrusted the charge and government of it to the Rev. Edward Saul, Doctor of Canon and Civil Law, and parish priest of Cashel; after his death to the Very Rev. Philip Meagher, D.D., of the Theological Faculty of Paris, parish priest of Fethard; and after his death again to the Rev. John Ryan, Theologian of the Faculty of Bordeaux, parish priest of Loughmore. When the young men presented themselves from time to time, the superiors above named examined them, gave them suitable instructions, and then made their report to the archbishop."

About the middle of the century another flourishing school was kept by two priests, Rev. John Murphy and Rev. John Austin, in Cook Street, at the head of Archbold's Court in Dublin. It was not intended exclusively for the aspirants to the ecclesiastical state, but it gave not a few zealous and devoted priests to the Church. It was here Father Betagh made his early studies, and here in after-life the same distinguished Jesuit and ornament of the Irish Church carried on the work of teaching till his death in 1811. In a sermon preached soon after Father Betagh's death by the Rev. Dr. Blake, himself a pupil of the same school, at a later period Bishop of Dromore, we find the following eulogy of the founders of this school to whom I have referred: "At that time there happened to be in this city two men of such astonishing merit that their zeal and labours would appear incredible if both were not attested by the clearest

evidence. The one was the great Father John Murphy, a man whom I cannot name without feeling myself almost inclined to kneel down and pay him homage ; a genius of the first order ; an orator, whose angelic soul spoke through every word and every look ; an accomplished preacher of the word of God, before he was a priest ; a martyr of charity ; an apostle, in fine, in whose short life shone forth all the virtues that could adorn human nature and dignify the priesthood, while they illuminated, comforted, and, if I may use the expression, regenerated the people of this city. The other was the no less celebrated Father John Austin, that man of the people, that servant of the servants of Christ, whose zeal was one continued blaze of light, and whose charity appeared in every form that could render him useful. Not only was he a missionary of the apostolic stamp, in converting and reclaiming sinners to repentance, but because he knew that ignorance is usually the parent of sin, and worldly education an incentive to pride, he opened a school in this city, and divided his time between his great duties in such a manner that, when we think of his labours for the instruction of youth, we wonder he could find time for any other employment ; and, when we consider his attention to preaching, and to the confessional, we are astonished that the strength and abilities of one man could be equal to such exertions.

“To this school of Father Austin, as the best seminary for the instruction of youth, the young Betagh was brought by his virtuous parents, or rather was conducted by Divine wisdom ; and here his devotion for the Church soon showed itself by signs that could not be mistaken.”

We find that at least one such school was opened in the Diocese of Down and Connor, despite the special dangers that beset the Catholic clergy of Ulster. Dr. Hugh McMullan, appointed to the united Sees of Down and Connor in the year 1779, had pursued his theological studies in the Irish College of Paris, and had graduated Doctor of Theology at the Sorbonne. Father O'Laverty, in his *History of the Bishops of Down and*

Connor, relates that "he was long remembered for his zealous exertions in the cause of education, and his successful efforts to counteract the open as well as the insidious practices of proselytism. . . He ardently forwarded schools where a pure education, untainted with proselytism, was carried out, and liberally assisted in their extension. In several of them, Latin and Greek, surveying and navigation, were taught, and in all dialing, which appeared to have great attraction at that time. These schools he repeatedly visited, and he personally examined the children. Tradition represents Dr. McMullan as tall, of distinguished appearance, a great scholar and preacher, and of singularly elegant manner in the pulpit and in general society." He died at Erynagh, in the County Down, on the 7th of October, 1794, aged 74 years.

It was, however, for the most part in the colleges and monasteries of friendly nations in Europe that the aspirants to the sanctuary had to seek for instruction in the higher branches of learning, and for the necessary preparation for the exercise of the sacred ministry. Dr. Healy, in his history of Maynooth College, has paid a meet tribute to those foreign colleges. "These Irish colleges abroad," he writes, "were the salvation of the faith in Ireland; and Irishmen for all time owe a debt of gratitude to their founders and patrons, and, before all others, to the kings of Spain, especially to Philip II. and Philip III. The history of these colleges is very interesting and highly edifying, from a religious, a literary, a patriotic point of view. Every one connected with them, the founders, the superiors, the students, were all animated with a lofty spirit of devotion to the cause of God and their country. In them the scholar's ardour and the priestly zeal were lighted up with a glow of the most passionate love for Ireland. Their high resolve in evil days, to devote their lives to the work of God in Ireland, in spite of danger and persecution, is like a light from heaven gleaming over a dark and dreary waste of waters."

The first difficulty that beset the aspirant to the sanctuary was to get away from Ireland. We have seen in former papers how those who proceeded for education to the Continent, and the parents and guardians who sent them thither, were alike subject to the severest penalties. The shipowners and merchants who co-operated with them in their flight incurred a no less risk. The following is a specimen of the viceregal proclamations on this head issued in those days: "By the Lord Deputy and Council, 10th March, 1602. We straightly charge, in her Majesty's name, that no merchant nor merchants, maister nor owner of any ship, barque, pickard, or other bottom whatsoever, nor mariner, nor other person nor persons whatsoever, not first licensed thereunto by the Lord Deputy, doe or shall traffick, trade, or take his or their voyage from any port, town, haven, or creek: and such licensed merchant shall take his or their corporal oath, and enter into a recognisance in a convenient sum to her Majesty that he shall not carry nor transport, nor suffer to be transported nor carried, with himself, by his means, procurement, consent, nor knowledge, any letters, messages, massing or other seditious books, or libels, or passengers whatsoever, but such as he shall produce and make known to the Lord Deputy; and he shall keep one orderly book of his proceedings therein: and any merchant, &c., who does not observe this shall have his ship and goods confiscated and forfeited to her Majesty, and their bodies to be imprisoned during the Queen's pleasure."

These laws and proclamations were not allowed to remain a dead letter. Severe penalties were inflicted, and the seaports were filled with spies on the look-out for the informer's reward, which was half the fine inflicted on conviction. All such enactments, however, were powerless to prevent priests, friars, and students from crossing and recrossing the sea at the call of duty. An ordinary way of evading the law was to be registered as an apprentice or merchant's clerk proceeding to the Continent to look after his master's business. The

youth was duly equipped with letters patent to some merchant in Spain or France, commending him as the representative of his Irish master. Hardy lads from the seaboard were shipped as sailors, and worked their passage across. Not unfrequently the student or newly-ordained priest was run across in a smuggler or in a fishing-hooker from some of the many creeks on the southern and western coasts. Such excursionists generally put out from the well-known coast after dusk, and next morning were far away from sight of land. By a thousand such artifices, and under manifold disguises, the aspirants to the sanctuary faced every peril, that they might be disciplined to become confessors of the faith, or perhaps martyrs for Christ. Towards the close of the sixteenth century, a distinguished Jesuit, Father Howling, sketching the early phases of the persecution, writes: "Many Irish Catholics have betaken themselves beyond the seas, without waiting even to bid farewell to their friends; most of them priests, but also many of them mere boys of thirteen or fourteen years of age, who preferred to pass amongst Catholics, with purity of faith, a very poor life, destitute of any certain means of subsistence, rather than live among their friends at home with danger to their faith, but with every reasonable want abundantly satisfied" (*Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. iii. p. 109).

When the sea was crossed the student often found new difficulties to await him. The number of exiles was so great, and the means of subsistence so precarious, that oftentimes whilst endeavouring to pursue his studies he had to face the direst hardships and privations. On account of the urgency of the case, to remedy in some measure this extreme want, the bishops in Ireland adopted the custom of promoting to the priesthood all such students as had attained the age prescribed by the Canons. Thus ordained, they were able, on arriving in France or Belgium or Spain, to obtain, by discharging some honorary chaplaincy duties, sufficient means for their support, whilst at the same time they pursued their

higher studies, and were trained for their future missionary career. This course was in many cases pursued even to the close of the eighteenth century. One of the commendatory letters which accompanied those student-priests to the Continent has happily been preserved. It was addressed to the Rev. Peter McMullan, afterwards parish priest of Rasharkin, in the County Down, by the Bishop of Down and Connor, Dr. McMullan, to whom we a little while ago referred, and is dated the 5th of August, 1792. It attests that the said Father McMullan was duly promoted to the priesthood, and was of unblemished life. It authorises him "to migrate from this kingdom of Ireland to the transmarine countries for the purpose of pursuing his philosophic and theological course." It thus continues: "With all respect and reverence, we request and pray the Most Rev. and Most Eminent Archbishop of Seville to take the aforesaid Priest Peter under the protection of his charity, and to assign him a place in the College of Seville, or elsewhere, in order that he may complete his philosophical and theological studies."

Many generous hearts throughout Spain and Italy, as well as in France and Germany and Belgium, showed practical sympathy with the poor students from Ireland; and, as the merits of their case became better known, abundant alms were offered to aid them in their distress. It was thus that the King of Spain, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, addressed a letter to his high officials, commending to their special care the students who would come to the kingdom from Ireland, and ordering a viaticum of £10 to be given to each of them when returning to their missionary field. So also the Pope by special brief granted permission to the Spanish fishermen to ply their fishing on a certain number of Sundays and holidays, the proceeds to be applied to aid the Irish students. The Irish merchants in Cadiz, Seville, Lisbon, and other cities, agreed to put a tax on every cask of wine which they shipped, for the same religious purpose. Many Spanish citizens of

Seville taxed themselves in like manner to assist the Irish colleges. Some of the Irish officers and swordsmen in the Continental armies, and, needless to say, many of the Irish professors in the various academies and universities, set aside a portion at least of their salaries to promote the same great cause, and thus to have a share in keeping alive the sacred spark of the faith in the land of their birth. Gradually burses were established in the various colleges, and towards the close of the last century it was calculated that the average number of Irish aspirants to the sacred ministry scattered through the various colleges of the Continent was fully four hundred. The Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev. Dr. Troy, in a memorial to the Government in 1794, distinctly asserts that "four hundred persons were constantly maintained and educated in these foreign colleges for the ministry of the Roman Catholic religion in Ireland."

Our space will not allow us to do much more than recall the names of the Continental colleges that throughout the dismal period of the persecution deserved so well of Ireland.

Lisbon was one of the first cities to prepare a home for Irish students. Being a much-frequented port, the exiles from all parts of Ireland were gathered there "like the wild geese in winter flying from the snowstorms of their native north." Among these homeless exiles were not a few poor scholars, without friends and without funds, but eager to pursue the paths of knowledge. A house was soon secured for their use, and a confraternity of noble citizens was formed, who undertook to maintain at their sole expense the Irish inmates. Thus, on the feast of St. Brigid, 1st of February, 1593, the very day on which Trinity College was inaugurated in Dublin, Lisbon threw open the portals of "The College for Irish Students, under the invocation of St. Patrick."

It was probably in the preceding year that another similar college was founded in connection with the great University of Salamanca. The royal residence was at

this time at Valladolid, and Irish refugees of every class flocked thither, relying for help on the bounty of the sovereign. Father White, an Irish Jesuit, gathering together a large number of scholars, presented them at a special audience to the king, and prayed him "to found a college for the poor exiles of Erin, banished from their homes by the savage laws of Queen Elizabeth." The king, moved by compassion, granted the request, and ordered a suitable home to be prepared for them at Salamanca. In a letter to the university authorities he specially commended the Irish students to their care, "so that as they have left their own country, and all they possessed in it, for the service of God our Lord, and for the preservation of the Catholic faith; and as they make profession of returning to preach in that country, and to suffer martyrdom if necessary, they may get in your University the reception which they have reason to expect. I am certain you will do this, and become their benefactors, so that with your subscription and that of the city, to the authorities of which I am also writing, they may be able to pursue their studies with content and freedom, and thereby attain the end they have in view."

The Irish College at Seville was founded in 1612. This beautiful Moorish city, flanked by many towers and approached by many gates, was at that time the great emporium of home and foreign trade for the fertile provinces of Andalusia. The Golden Tower, erected on the river's bank, derived its name from the fact that American ships, laden with the golden plunder of transatlantic lands, stored therein their precious freights. It was subject, however, to pestilence, and many an Irish scholar perished there, a true martyr of charity.

"We must remember," writes Dr. Healy, "that when the poor students from Ireland sought to pass to the Continent, they had no choice either of a ship or of a port. They were glad to get a passage in any vessel for any port, especially in the friendly harbours of Spain. No merchantman dare carry them openly: they gene-

rally embarked as merchants' clerks or apprentices, sent out to carry on the Irish trade in foreign warehouses, both in France and Spain. The Irish trade was far more brisk in the seventeenth century than it is in the nineteenth ; and so it came to pass that hardly a single ship from the ports of Erin landed in the estuary of the Guadalquivir that did not carry out one or more youths destined for the Irish mission, who, it was hoped, would find a home in the hospitable colleges of Spain."

A young Irish priest, Theobald Stapleton, was mainly instrumental in founding the college in Seville. "A goodly number of his fellow-country students gathered round him," we are told ; "he took a house and sought food for them, neglecting his own studies that they might prosecute theirs with greater freedom and be able to give a good account of themselves in the public schools." Father Stapleton, a few years later, returned to Ireland, and became the proto-martyr of the college which had the merit, in after times, of being prolific of martyrs in the cause of Ireland and of Holy Church.

Other colleges for Irish students were founded in Madrid, Alcala, and Santiago. Most of these colleges of the Spanish peninsula were in the course of time aggregated to Salamanca, which towards the close of the eighteenth century reckoned among its students not a few who rendered great services to the Irish Church. Dr. Curtis, afterwards Archbishop of Armagh, was its rector for thirty-six years, and contemporaries within its walls were Most Rev. Dr. Murray, Archbishop of Dublin ; Most Rev. Dr. Laffan, Archbishop of Cashel ; and Most Rev. Dr. Kelly, Archbishop of Tuam. During the vicissitudes of the Peninsula towards the close of the last century, most of these colleges were closed, and almost all their revenues were absorbed by the various corporations, or were diverted into the pockets of private citizens.

In Louvain, the great seat of learning in Belgium, there were three Irish colleges—one for the Dominicans, another for the Franciscans, and a third for the secular

clergy. Bursaries were also set apart in more than one of the diocesan seminaries for the education of Irish students. It was meet that the persecuted Levites of Ireland should find a tranquil home in Belgium. Irish missionaries had had, in early days, no small share in the conversion of its people, and Irish martyrs had shed their blood to sanctify its soil. The debt of gratitude was generously repaid. "During the time of the Penal Laws," writes Dr. Healy, "Irishmen of every grade, princes and prelates, warriors and scholars, were received by Belgium with the warmest welcome and the most generous hospitality. They were raised, in many instances, to high positions of honour and emolument. They became professors in her schools, dignitaries in her churches, officers in her armies. They laboured hard and honourably in the land of their adoption, and gave the savings of their lives to found bursaries for the education of their fellow-countrymen in the friendly colleges of Belgium."

The college for the secular clergy, known as "Collegium Pastorale," was founded in 1624 by Eugene MacMahon, Archbishop of Dublin, and gave many illustrious ornaments to the Irish Church. An official list of the burses founded in the college was published in 1705, by Joseph II., from which it appears that considerable sums were invested by various benefactors, from Dr. MacMahon's first burse in 1624, down to Kent's foundation of 7,007 florins in 1781. The whole sum amounted to 73,217 florins. "The Pastoral College continued to produce some of the first scholars of the age, and also continued to send a number of priests every year to do the work of God in Ireland, down to the final suppression of the University itself by the French in 1797. In the year 1806 the Irish College was transformed into a Freemasons' lodge, and their first banquet was celebrated in the old chapel of the college. However, they also disappeared from the place in 1835, and the buildings have since been converted into private houses."

The Franciscan College of St. Anthony of Padua at Louvain was one of the most famous seats of learning in that city of schools, and won immortal fame by its zeal in preserving the ancient records of Ireland. The names of Colgan and Ward, of O'Cleary and O'Sheerin "will be amongst the very latest to fade from the bright galaxy of our Irish worthies; and the monastic school to which they belonged may well take a first place on the roll of the famous schools of Ireland, for Irish it was in every respect, though located in a foreign city, just as Iona was an Irish island in Scottish seas."

The Irish Dominicans had also a convent in Louvain, dating from the beginning of the seventeenth century. It, too, gave many distinguished men and devoted labourers to the Irish Church.

A letter written on the 7th of March, 1764, by the Vicar-General of Tournay to the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Fitzsimon, published in the *Spicilegium Ossoriense* (vol. iii. p. 275), gives some interesting details regarding another Irish college at Lisle, in Belgium. This college was founded specially for students from Leinster, and the president was chosen from among the Irish Capuchins of the Convent of Bar-sur-Aube, in Champagne, but its temporalities were managed by a committee of "Protectors," chosen by the Bishop of Tournay and the magistrates of Lisle. One of the fundamental rules of the college required the students, even under a penalty, to use the Irish language in conversation on two days of the week. On the other days they might use either Latin or French, but not English. A difficulty had quite recently arisen. A president was duly selected by the Capuchin Fathers, but it appears that he was ignorant of Irish. For this reason the Protectors refused to accept his appointment, as he was quite unequal to the task to equip the young missionaries for their duties in Ireland. The Capuchins, on the other hand, contended that the Irish tongue was quite unnecessary in Leinster, and that English was the language required for the due exercise of the sacred ministry.

The Bishop of Tournay, being unable to decide the question, referred it to the Archbishop of Dublin. It is probable the Archbishop gave judgment in favour of the Protectors, but his letter has not been preserved. Except within the walls of the city of Dublin, very little English was spoken in any of the Leinster dioceses. The wealthier Catholic families, indeed, knew the English as a studied language and used it for commercial purposes, but even these, in their homes and in their friendly intercourse with one another, cherished the Irish as their mother tongue.

CHAPTER THE TENTH

Beneficent influence of the Colleges of France and Rome—France repays her debt of gratitude to Ireland—Irish students in Paris—Other Irish Colleges in France—The Holy See contributes to the support of the exiled clergy—Dr. Philip McDavitt, Bishop of Derry, student of the Sorbonne—He founds a little seminary on the banks of the Finn—Charles O'Donnell's diary of journey to Paris—Literary fame of Michael Moore—Irish establishments in France suppressed at the close of the eighteenth century—Reopening of colleges in Paris in 1801—Letter of Dr. Hussey, Bishop of Waterford—Colleges of St. Isidore and St. Clement in Rome—Michael MacDonough, O.S.D., Bishop of Kilmore—The Ludovisian College in Rome—Singular petition of the agent of the English Catholics in Rome—Reply of Irish representatives—Joint petition of the Archbishop of Cashel and the Bishop of Ossory—Hugh MacMahon, Bishop of Clogher, translated to Armagh in 1713—The trying period of his episcopate described by Dr. Renehan—His Report to Propaganda on the Dioceses of Ulster—A strange feature of the Penal legislation—Bernard MacMahon, Archbishop of Armagh—Poem in his praise—Succeeded in the Primacy by his brother, Ross MacMahon—Distinguished for his singular talent in Rome—The brothers Primates interred at Edergole—Peter Creagh, Archbishop of Dublin—His remarkable escape at trial in Cork—Michael O'Reilly, translated from Derry to Armagh—Difficulties which beset his episcopate—Benign character of Richard O'Reilly, Archbishop of Armagh.

In the preceding chapter we briefly sketched the benefits conferred on the Irish Church by the colleges in Spain and Belgium throughout the dismal era of the Penal Laws. We will now endeavour to bring this portion of our subject to a close by setting forth the no less beneficent influence exercised by the colleges of France and

Rome in keeping well trimmed the lamp of faith and handing on untainted and unimpaired the religious traditions of Ireland.

In a rough way it may truly be said that throughout the eighteenth century three-fourths of the Catholic clergy in Ireland received their higher education in the colleges of France. Many of these colleges, however, dated back to a much earlier period, and some of them began to extend their welcome to the Irish pilgrim students as early as the first years of persecution for religion under Queen Elizabeth. The Church of France owed a no small debt of gratitude to Ireland on account of the distinguished Irish scholars who were among the first to organize her schools, in the early mediæval times. Dungal and Scotus Erigena won bright fame among their contemporaries by the depth and variety of their learning, and laid the foundations of the palace schools which afterwards grew into the great University of Paris. France abundantly repaid the debt by her generous and untiring kindness extended to Irish scholars throughout the whole period of persecution. As early as the year 1578 there was a considerable number of Irish students in Paris, who formed themselves into a distinct community under the direction of Father John Lee. Early in the seventeenth century a commodious home was provided for them through the generosity of M. de Lescapier, and this community, under many vicissitudes and with occasional change of residence, has continued to the present day, under the title of *Seminaire des Irlandais*, to render great service to the Irish Church.

One of the accusations against Ireland made by Dempster, the Scotch writer, was to the effect that her clerics were living in poverty, scattered through the French capital, while on the contrary the Scotch were provided with rich and ample colleges. To this David Rothe, Bishop of Ossory, replied in his *Hibernia Resurgens*, written in 1621, that more than twenty students resided in the Irish College in Paris, and were a model

to others by their strict discipline, their assiduous application to study, and their earnestness in preparing for their future missionary work: "Some of them," he adds, "are sons of barons, others are of the lesser nobility, or of respectable families; all of them are virtuous and talented; some are in Sacred Orders, others are preparing for ordination according to their age and studies. I venture to say that from this one college more priests have gone forth within three years than there have gone to Scotland from all the colleges within ten years." Of Father John Lee he writes: "He is a venerable man of our nation, an aged priest, whose integrity, prudence, and piety are well known to very many in the city and University of Paris."

Another anonymous tract published the same year in Antwerp gives the number of students in the Irish College, Paris, as "at least twenty-four," and states that they were supported by the widow of the illustrious deceased M. Lescopier and other generous faithful friends.

More than one other college was organised from time to time in Paris for the exiled students who sought a refuge there. For instance, under the Cromwellian rule in 1660 the College of St. Barbara was inaugurated by Rev. Dermid Hedermann, an Irish priest of the Diocese of Limerick, and in it more than twenty students were maintained. It was from this college that the heroic priest, Father John Grace, went forth on the mission to his suffering countrymen in Barbadoes, where he proved himself a true martyr of charity. There were other Irish colleges at Douay, Pont-à-Musson, Nantes, Toulouse, Montpellier, and Bordeaux. In an official statement to Propaganda in the year 1788, it is set forth that sixteen bishops of the Irish Hierarchy at that date had made their studies in France. About the same time the Irish College of Paris numbered on its roll 160 students, of whom 100 had been ordained priests before setting out from Ireland for France.

The Holy See, more especially towards the beginning of the century, contributed munificently to the support of the exiled clergy and students of Ireland. A list of payments made by the Nuncio in Paris from August, 1698, to the 7th of January, 1699, has been published. To the Irish College, known as the College of the Lombards in Paris, a sum of 1,000 livres was granted "for young priests recently arrived from Ireland to pursue their studies." Another Parisian community got 500 livres for the maintenance of ten scholars lately arrived from Ireland and destined for the ecclesiastical state. Forty other Irish scholars got 1,341 livres; and about 20,000 livres were distributed to various religious exiles. Among the latter are reckoned 118 Dominicans, 211 Franciscans, and 26 Augustinians.

Many of the bishops and priests to whose heroism I referred in the former chapters received their ecclesiastical education in France. One or two other instances may be mentioned, the better to illustrate the condition of the Irish Catholics under the Penal Laws. Dr. Philip McDavitt, Bishop of Derry, pursued his higher studies at the Sorbonne in Paris. His family held a conspicuous place in the annals of Inishowen. His birthplace, which is still pointed out in the parish of Upper Fahan, is a most picturesque spot, commanding a widespread view of the valley of Fahan, of the historic waters of Lough Swilly, and of the lofty mountains of Tyrconnel. In 1740 a friendly vessel brought the young McDavitt to France. He spent twenty-four years on its friendly shores, as student in the Irish College and as chaplain at one of the embassies. When he returned to Fahan his aged mother was still alive, but the little black-haired boy with whom she had parted twenty-four years before was now a grey-haired man. He entered at once with zeal on the missionary duties in his native diocese, but the see very soon becoming vacant, the burden of its episcopate was imposed upon him by Brief dated 4th of January, 1766. One of his first Confirmation ceremonies was held in his native parish. Confirmation was adminis-

tered in the open air, for there was as yet no church in the district. The spot is still pointed out in a field and along a hedgerow at Rushfield. The bishop founded a little seminary at Claudy, on the banks of the river Finn. The house is still standing, a plain, thatched building, not unlike the farm-houses of Ulster. The bishop was president and professor. Twelve students were soon found to form a logic class. One who was present has left an account of the opening ceremony: "On the first day that the logic class met," he says, "when the good bishop began to deliver his first lecture, his big heart was filled to overflowing, and the warm tears came trickling down his cheeks. They were tears of joy. Twelve students in a logic class in Ireland during the last quarter of the eighteenth century was a great event. It recalled the Irish history of bygone days. It reminded the worthy prelate also of the schools, and the colleges, and the many happy days he had spent in lovely France." The little seminary had its sunny memories and its hallowed recollections. It prepared many youths for the priesthood in Derry and in the neighbouring dioceses also.

Dr. McDavitte received as coadjutor in 1797 another student of the Irish College in Paris, Charles O'Donnell. What is interesting in connection with the early days of this prelate, when it was no longer penal to set out to pursue studies on the Continent, is a short diary of his journey to Paris :—

"*July, 1777.*—Invoice of things put into my saddlebags at the Rev. Dr. McDavitte's house, near Strabane—9 shirts of fine linen, marked C.D ; 6 ditto of coarse kind ; 8 stocks, 9 pair of stockings, 2 pair of breeches, 2 flannel waistcoats, 1 French grammar, 2 Irish hymn-books, 2 pocket-handkerchiefs, 6 pairs of ruffled sleeves.

"*1777.*—Left Strabane July 8th. Slept that night at Augher, at Widow Duggan's ; second night at Castleblaney. Third day rode to Drogheda. Stayed there two nights. Supped and took breakfast with the ladies of the nunnery. Became acquainted with Father Burrell and some gentlemen besides. Fourth day of my journey

went to Dublin on the stage-coach. Stayed there two nights. Took the packet-boat to Liverpool, at five o'clock afternoon. Had a pleasant view of the country going down the Liffey, the Hill of Howth to the left hand, the Wicklow Mountains to the right, which we had in view next morning, likewise Holyhead; sailed down the Welsh coast, and arrived at Liverpool on the 16th at 8 p.m. Took a slight view of the docks, which were well supplied with ships. Saw also the floodgates, draw-bridges, with some other curiosities. The most pleasing view was of the Exchange, from which the whole town could be seen. That evening (the next, we presume, after his arrival) I took my seat in the Liverpool Fly, and set out for London at five o'clock. Drove all night. Dined at Lichfield, about 100 miles from Liverpool, a country village, not very large, but remarkable for an ancient church, adorned with three spires and many pictures of saints and other religious people, as they seemed to me to be—set up in places outside the church, all made for them. Supped that night at Meridon, about thirty miles off. Went by Coventry, St. Albans, and Highgate. From thence to London, where I arrived at eight o'clock p.m. on the 19th day of the month. Stayed there two nights, having heard Mass in Lincoln Field Chapel. Saw the royal apartments in the king's palace. Took an outside passage on the Dover stage, being anxious to see the country. Went out by the Queen's Head Inn, 8 miles from London, to Rochester, a long narrow town, with but few streets, having the Thames running through the middle. From thence to Canterbury, twenty-five miles; to Dover, fifteen miles; seventy-three miles from London to Dover. The country seemed very productive—beans, wheat, and hops; no flax or potatoes, but great quantities of brush or wood. That day the rain fell prodigiously; we had little pleasure on the journey, but very wet skins for our curiosity. That night we slept at Dover. Entered the College of the Lombards on the 26th July, 1777."

Not a few students of the Irish colleges in France in

the eighteenth century attained considerable literary fame. One of the most remarkable of these was the Rev. Michael Moore, who was born in Bridge Street, Dublin, in 1640. He was son of Patrick Moore, a Catholic merchant, in whose house Roger O'More, one of the leaders of the Confederates of 1641, had lodged just before the outbreak. He studied philosophy and divinity first at Nantes under the Oratorians, and afterwards at Paris. He subsequently taught rhetoric and philosophy in one of the French seminaries, and in 1684 entered on the missionary duties in his own native diocese of Dublin. During James the Second's brief reign he was for a time chaplain to Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnel, and in 1689, "on the unanimous recommendation of the Roman Catholic bishops," he was appointed Provost of Trinity College. It is recorded of him that he extended great kindness to the Protestant refugees and prisoners; and it was largely owing to his exertions that the valuable collections in the library were preserved during the military occupation of Trinity College. His latter years were spent in exile in Paris, where he enjoyed the favour of the French court, and he held some of the highest offices in connection with the University of Paris. He is said to have been twice rector of the University. He was also principal of the College of Navarre, and Professor of Classics and Philosophy at the Collège de France. Before settling in Paris he spent some years in Rome, where he enjoyed the confidence of the reigning Pontiff, Clement XI. He also became Rector of Cardinal Barbarigo's newly-established College at Montefiascone, where in 1700 he published an interesting lecture, entitled "*Hortatio ad studium linguæ Græcæ et Hebraicæ.*" He died in Paris in 1726, aged 85 years, and his remains were laid to rest in the chapel of the Irish College in that city.

When the revolutionary storm burst over France towards the close of the eighteenth century all the Irish religious establishments were suppressed, the students scattered, and the funds confiscated. Right Rev. Dr.

Hussey, Bishop of Waterford, acting as agent for the Spanish crown, proceeded to Paris in 1801, and successfully negotiated with the French Government for the reopening of the Irish colleges in Paris. A singular tribute was paid to the successful efforts of this prelate, when the Sovereign Pontiff addressed a letter to him, under date September 5, 1801, congratulating him on the services rendered to religion in Ireland and England, and in particular on the success of his negotiations in Paris "in qua," thus the letter runs, "*Collegio Ecclesiasticis Hibernicis educandis constituta patrocinio Catholici Regis iterum nationi tuæ vindicasti.*"

Dr. Hussey had been mainly instrumental as representative of the Irish bishops in securing the establishment of St. Patrick's College at Maynooth by the British Government, and for a time he discharged the duties of President of that College. This fact lends a special interest to the following letter, which he addressed to the Rev. Dr. Walsh, rector of the Irish College in Paris, on September 6, 1801: "I desire to congratulate with you and with the Catholics of Ireland," he thus writes, "upon the restoration of their national college to its original foundation; it is to your persevering exertions that Ireland is indebted for this truly national blessing. . . . The institution of the R.C. College of Maynooth is undoubtedly a munificent institution, and very beneficial to the Catholic clergy of Ireland; but it would require a free communication of principles and sentiments, diffusing the same religious code of laws, imparting the same lights, &c., all derived from the High Altar of the Catholic Church, where the Supreme Head of it sits, to spread the truths of the Gospel, communicating the same doctrine, for the administration of the same sacraments, without limitation of time or place, from pole to pole, wherever man is found or God adored: these are advantages which colleges situated only on the Continent, having full and free communication with the head of the Church and with the rest of the learned Catholic world, can attain and which an insular situation and

local laws and customs may eventually deny. A Sister house in Paris fully answers this purpose of communication."

During the course of the French Revolution the Irish colleges in Toulouse, Bordeaux, Nantes, Lille, Douay, Antwerp, and Louvain were irretrievably lost.

In Rome invaluable services were rendered throughout the whole period of the persecution by the two religious communities which still subsist—St. Isidore's, of the Irish Franciscans, and St. Clement's, of the Irish Dominicans. The history of these venerable communities has been often told, and need not be repeated here. The names of Luke Wadding, Father Harold, and a hundred others render illustrious the roll of St. Isidore's; whilst no less brilliant are the names of De Burgo and Dr. Troy among the students of St. Clement's. Besides such illustrious names, there were many missionaries from both communities who are now almost forgotten; but who, nevertheless, laboured with great zeal to preserve to the Irish people the blessings of the faith. Such, for instance, was the Dominican Father Michael MacDonough, who was consecrated Bishop of Kilmore in 1728. With a price set upon his head, and with priest-hunters ever in pursuit, he risked all dangers and secretly ministered to his flock. At length, in July, 1739, his place of concealment was discovered, and he himself was seized, and his cross and ring, with books and papers, were carried off as evidence of his episcopal rank. He was, however, in a few days rescued; and though a reward of £200 was offered for his apprehension, he lay concealed for a time in Dublin, and thence made his escape to the Continent. Though the penalties of high treason now awaited him, we meet with him in Rome in December, 1740, preparing to return to his diocese. He died at Lisbon in 1746, and on his monument in the Irish Dominican Church of the Rosary in that city he is commemorated as "*vir prudentia, fidei zelo ac religionis amore præclarus, post varias hæreticorum persecutiones diuturna infirmitate consumptus.*"

The good work achieved by the Irish College of the secular clergy in Rome is not so well known as that of the religious communities, and for that reason it may not be out of place to dwell upon its history at some length. Founded in the year 1627, through the munificence of Cardinal Ludovisi, from whom it was generally designated "the Ludovisian College," it gave very many zealous missionaries and distinguished prelates to the Irish Church in the seventeenth century. The most illustrious of these was the Venerable Oliver Plunkett, Archbishop of Armagh, and glorious martyr, who died for the faith at Tyburn on July 11, 1681. It was not less fruitful of zealous confessors of the faith in the eighteenth century.

In the commencement of the eighteenth century a singular petition was presented to the Holy See by the agent of the English Catholics in Rome, praying that the three hitherto distinct colleges of the Irish, the Scotch, and the English students in the Eternal City should be amalgamated into one under an English superior. The petition was supported by all the influence of the exiled monarch's court at St. Germain, and by the intrigues of several English residents in Rome. To his credit, be it said, the Vicar Apostolic of Scotland, in the name of the Scottish clergy, protested against the proposed scheme, declaring it to be subversive of the best interests of their Church.

Several Irish bishops, at that time in exile at Paris, together with some of the leading clergy and nobility, held a meeting to consider the scheme thus submitted to the Holy See, and their memorial thereon, forwarded to the authorities of Propaganda, reveals to us the prevailing sentiment of the Irish clergy and people in those days. In the first place, it remarks, the proposed scheme was quite impracticable, for "the three nations are so utterly at variance in their ideas and sentiments and interest and language that it is quite impossible for their students to live together in peace and concord." This national antipathy, it adds, arises not only from the past

wars, but also from the effects of these wars, so that, as a matter of fact, the interests of the three nations are mutually conflicting, "and they regard each other rather as strangers than as fellow-subjects of the same king." The memorial thus continues: "The English regard the Irish as a conquered people, and treat them in effect rather as slaves than as fellow-subjects. The laws and the liberties of Ireland have been destroyed, and its lands distributed among the English. In several counties the inhabitants were obliged to lay aside their own names and assume others of English fashion; and since the time of Henry the Eighth every effort has been made to root out the religion of the people and to suppress its public exercise. Ireland has been robbed of its colleges and schools. Its people are declared incapable of holding civil or military offices, either in their own country or in England or Scotland. In a word, every measure has been adopted that could tend to oppress, impoverish, and extirpate the whole Irish race, and bring ruin on the country. Nor is there any prospect of those embittered feelings coming to an end; for the Catholics of Ireland, in proportion to the Protestant settlers, being twenty to one, the Protestants are always in alarm lest the Catholics should acquire any power, and the old proverb continues as true as ever, 'He who injures never pardons.'" The memorial thus concludes: "Having maturely considered the whole matter, it is the unanimous opinion of the prelates, clergy, and nobility of Ireland assembled here, that, should the proposed amalgamation of colleges be effected, it will be prejudicial to the Irish mission, it will be a source of affliction to our people, now suffering from a persecution more violent than ever, and it will lead to most bitter consequences. To be silent as to the rest, one inevitable result must be the total loss to us of an Irish college in Rome" (The Vatican Archives, *France*, vol. cclxxviii., folio 1). This memorial had the desired effect, and the Irish College for the secular clergy in Rome continued to send zealous missionaries to Ireland till it was suppressed towards the close

of the century during the French usurpation of Rome.

Another petition was presented to the Congregation of Propaganda on May 2, 1719, on the part of Christopher Butler, Archbishop of Cashel, and Malachy Dulany, Bishop of Ossory, setting forth that "at present almost all the secular clergy in Ireland" have come to the mission from France, and that few "have a practical knowledge of the usages of Rome." It prays, therefore, that additional burses for the Irish mission be founded in the various colleges of the secular clergy throughout Italy. This petition does not appear to have had any result. In an official list of Propaganda, drawn up in 1744, the only Irish students of the secular clergy throughout Italy referred to are "nine students in the Irish College, Rome, and four on burses for the Irish nation in the College of Propaganda." However, though the number of students was so limited, both colleges contributed not a few bright names to the Irish Church throughout the eighteenth century.

Among the most distinguished students of the Irish College in Rome were the three MacMahons—Hugh MacMahon, Bernard MacMahon, and Ross MacMahon, who were in succession Bishops of Clogher, and subsequently in succession Archbishops of Armagh. Bernard and Ross were brothers, and were nephews of their predecessor, Hugh. The three Archbishops held the sees of Clogher and Armagh from 1707 to 1749. A few details connected with their episcopate will serve to add some colouring to the picture of the Church of Ireland in those days.

Dr. Hugh MacMahon was appointed to the See of Clogher on the 15th of March, 1707. He was transferred to the Primatial See of Armagh in 1713, and continued faithfully at his post till his death on the 2nd of August, 1737. His episcopate embraced one of the most trying periods of Ireland's suffering for the Faith. The Act of Registration of the year 1704 extended a limited toleration to the parochial registered clergy. When any of

these died, however, it became penal for any other priest to officiate in the vacant parish, and thus the enemies of the Church expected that the flock without a pastor would easily become a prey to heresy. This, however, was considered to be too slow a process by the persecutors, and hence the Act of 1709 was passed, enjoining the oath of abjuration on all the registered clergy, and as almost without exception all refused to take this oath, all the clergy alike became persecuted. "Then it was," writes Dr. Renehan, "that the exiled bishops and clergy, with a generous contempt for life, a noble, heroic zeal not often equalled and never surpassed in any country or at any time, returned fearlessly to the field of martyrdom. So early as 1708, some few of these champions of the Faith had returned (and among them Dr. Hugh MacMahon); the number of arrivals successively increased each following year, until there was scarcely a creek on the Irish coast where three or four did not effect a landing. It is not that persecution slept, or that Government relaxed its vigilance. A system of espionage which the Sicilian tyrant might envy, was established at home and abroad; the trade of a spy or priest-catcher was, by a resolution of the Parliament, declared an honourable profession; and when such authentic eulogy, added to the reward of £50 per head, could not create a sufficient number of villains in Ireland, the Government scrupled not to hire unbelieving Jews to hunt and ferret out the heroic ministers of the priesthood of Christ. In some instances ships were refused admittance into the Irish ports, because they were known to have bishops or priests on board, although there was none to identify their persons; in others, mayors or governors received letters of severe reprimand from the Castle for neglect, having discovered such persons, on the second or third day after the vessel on which they sailed had reached the harbour's mouth. Through such means hundreds of priests were taken away, but their places were soon filled up by others. There were, on the other hand, in every part of the country some Protestant gentlemen who

afforded, in their houses, an unsuspected asylum to the hunted priests. Even the more bigoted were sometimes softened into pity by the excess of clerical suffering, or warmed into admiration by their noble, disinterested, courageous zeal. But there was, above all, a religious and enthusiastically affectionate people that shared the last potato with the priest, that sighed and prayed for their safety, and often kept sentinel round the bed in which he snatched a few hours of fright-broken sleep.

“Never was there a people more worthy of or blessed with a more magnanimous priesthood. Wretched as was the condition of the clergy and the people in the other provinces, it was still worse in Ulster. The Catholic population was miserably poor, and were not near one-half of the Protestants in number, the latter being, by the census of 1731, reckoned at 360,632, the former only at 158,028. The rancorous intolerance of the dissenters, and the severity of the magistrates, unmitigated by any of the checks that restrained it in other parts, also concurred to heighten the peril and aggravate the sufferings of the northern mission. In better times, the See of Armagh supplied the Venerable Plunkett with no better accommodation than a little thatched house, and a revenue under £50 per annum; if Dr. MacMahon had a dwelling, he dared not always inhabit it, and his revenue must have been quite inconsiderable. During a great part of his time, he was obliged to wander about from place to place, often saying Mass and administering Confirmation in the open air, or under the arch of a deserted lime-kiln, or in the solitude of the wood, or the sequestered valley, for, except in Louth, he had scarcely a chapel in the entire of his extensive diocese. The excessive labours he took upon himself in the beginning of his administration, added to the privations he was obliged to endure, soon impaired his constitution; but in spite of debility and peril, he continued to the end of his life frequently to visit every part of his diocese, correcting, consoling, and instructing all unto salvation. History may not deem the religious performance of ordinary,

though arduous, duties sufficiently remarkable to claim its notice ; but it was in such duties alone Dr. MacMahon delighted, and it was by the exactness and perfection with which he discharged them, that he became a truly great and extraordinary prelate. The fury of intolerance began to abate towards the end of his life, and these last few years were passed in comparative security and comfort. He carefully husbanded his little revenue, that he might be able to relieve the indigent ; he practised the strictest economy in his own expenses, that he might be liberal to the poor and the unfriended." In the Irish College, Paris, there is a portrait of this venerable primate, painted in 1714 with the inscription : "Illustrissimus et Reverendissimus Hugo Mattei (MacMahon) Archiep. Armachanus, Totius Hib. Primas, Collegii Ludovisiani de Urbe olim alumnus, ætatis 54, A.D. 1714." The coat of arms of the MacMahons is added, with the motto, "Virtus omnia terit."

In the beginning of 1714 this illustrious Archbishop presented to the Congregation of Propaganda a detailed Report on the condition of the Church in the various Sees of Ulster. He had been already translated from Clogher to Armagh towards the close of the preceding year, but the briefs of his appointment had not as yet reached him, and hence he dwells particularly on the See of Clogher, of which he was as yet bishop. This report is given in full in the original Latin in the second volume of *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, pp. 470-488 ; a brief summary of it must suffice for our present purpose. On his entrance into Clogher, he says, he found neither ring, nor mitre, nor cross, nor any of the Pontifical vestments, nor even a chalice or missal. His appointment was hailed with joy by the Catholics, but their rejoicing exposed him to greater danger from the priest-hunters. In his correspondence with the Nuncio at Brussels he was obliged to use cyphers, lest his letters would be detected. He adds that "In no mission in Christendom is correspondence with Rome so difficult as in Ireland." To escape detection he often changed his residence and

his name, and even his dress. When he assembled his priests in conference, it was either in some out-of-the-way private house, or in the open-air, in the woods or mountains. Each priest had a large district to attend to; the people were so poor that they could not support more priests. Throughout Ulster all the towns and all the fertile lands were occupied by the planters; nothing was left for the Catholics but the mountains and marshes. Hence the people were so poor that many of them would require help themselves, instead of giving help to the priests. On Sunday mornings Mass was celebrated soon after midnight, and was seldom said at the same place on two successive Sundays. Immediately before Mass Confessions were heard, the children were baptized, and religious instruction was given. The people were most fervent. Many of them, though advanced in years, would rise in the middle of the night in order to assist at Mass, and those at a distance would start on their journey from the preceding evening, and this often in the middle of winter and in frost and snow. It was usual for the priest when celebrating Mass to have a veil over his face. When Mass was said in a private house, it was generally celebrated in a small room, to which none but the assistant was admitted. The door was left open, so that the voice of the celebrant could be heard. If Mass were celebrated in the open-air, the people took care not to look at the priest, or even at any of those who were assisting at Mass, as they were liable to be summoned at any moment to be interrogated regarding the priest who celebrated or those who were present. There were thirty priests in the Diocese of Clogher, and each of them gave him yearly sums varying from five shillings to fifteen shillings. This was the bishop's only means of support. The priests themselves had no fixed residence; they went about from house to house, poorly clothed and poorly fed, and those who harboured them were liable to confiscation and to perpetual imprisonment. Several priests had told him that for four or five months they had not tasted flesh meat; and when they got any money towards

their support from the people, instead of using it for their own necessities, they had to apply it to conciliate some troublesome official, or to buy off some informer.

One strange feature of the hardships to which the Catholics were subjected is specially referred to by Dr. MacMahon. If any injury were done to the property of the planters, compensation was levied on the neighbouring Catholics, and the priest was thrown into jail until the amount was paid. There were instances when the Presbyterian planters swore to some pretended injury done to them, and had the compensation levied as usual on the Catholics; when, subsequently, however, the fraud became known, and even officially proved, the Catholics sought in vain to have the exacted fines refunded to them. Dr. MacMahon further relates that on one occasion when going to the island of Lough Derg, where immense crowds assembled every year to approach the sacraments, he travelled as a merchant from Dublin, and received very hospitable entertainment at the house of a Protestant minister.

This sad condition of things, as set forth in detail in regard to Clogher, was to be regarded as a picture of every diocese in the province of Ulster.

Dr. Hugh MacMahon was more than once thrown into prison and subjected there to great hardships. He was distinguished by his literary merit. His quarto volume, entitled *Jus Primatiale Armacanum*, is the ablest work written in defence of the rights of the Primate of Armagh.

Bernard MacMahon, nephew of the preceding archbishop, was appointed to Clogher in 1718 as administrator and Vicar Apostolic, but without episcopal consecration. His Brief of appointment as Bishop of Clogher is dated April 7, 1727, and he was translated to Armagh in 1737. We have already referred to this illustrious archbishop in a former chapter (p. 26). The Internuncio in Brussels writes of him in 1718 that he held the office of Dean of the Diocese of Clogher, and that he was "of sound

doctrine and of exemplary life, and beloved by the clergy of the diocese." Dr. Renehan also relates of him that "His whole life was remarkable for humility, holiness, and simplicity."

In a Memorial presented to Cardinal Corsini, Protector of the Kingdom of Ireland, in 1737, Bernard MacMahon is spoken of as "a near relative of the deceased archbishop: as Bishop of Clogher he has been remarkable for zeal, charity, prudence, and sound doctrine; for many years he has been *socius laborum* of the deceased primate, and he is quite imbued with his spirit. He has all the qualities which St. Paul requires in bishops in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus. He is in his 58th year, and belongs to a highly distinguished family of that province."

In connection with this prelate there is preserved an interesting document, probably unique in its eulogy of an Irish bishop at this dreary period of Ireland's sufferings for the Faith. The document to which I refer is a poem of twenty-nine verses in the Irish language, written by a local poet, Patrick O'Prunty, in 1738, and, as far as I am aware, has never been printed. It is described, in its MS. heading, as "composed on the occasion of the Primate Brian MacMahon, and his brother, Ross MacMahon, Bishop of Clogher, coming to live at Ballymacscanlon, near Dundalk." A copy of the original, with a literal translation, was given to the writer of these pages many years ago by the Rev. C. P. Meehan, of SS. Michael and John's, Dublin. I insert a literal translation of this poem, as it serves to make better known to us the prelates who, despite all the terrors of the Penal Laws, continued to watch over their flocks, and to hand on uninterrupted the sacred traditions of the Faith in Ireland.

Of welcomes ninety millions I give to thee,
Who comest with Christ's symbol in thy hand,
Gifted with wisdom and with power supreme,
To rule and guide the myriads of our land.

A glorious tree thou art, dispensing shade,
Sprung from the noble root of Heremon,
True essence of the best blood of the Gaels,
Whose sceptre ruled our soil in days long gone.

Rich jewel of the Church of Innisfail,
Successor of St. Patrick, psalmist sweet,
Whose voice is loudest in the sacred choirs,
Praising the Lord in strains most exquisite.

A real carbuncle set in gold thou art,
Whose right is to unfurl soft banners white
And stand amid the Sovereign King's elect,
In the proud front of battle, strong and bright.

Bold and experienced in the heavenly love,
Thou hast exhausted learning's deepest springs ;
O holy herald of melodious voice,
Whose mouth breathes precepts of the King of Kings.

A powerful ambassador from God,
Vicegerent of the Christ of thorn-crowned brow,
A sweetly sounding trumpet of loud tone,
Brian, most noble and beloved art thou.

Tree of the wood that tops o'er every wood,
A stately oak that axe would never maim,
A sun-tower, builded with strong masonry,
Is the high Lord who comes in Patrick's name.

Clothed with wisdom, as was Solomon,
Skilled in the subtlest secrets of all books,
Faith and philosophy thou hast upheld,
And suffering man rejoices in thy looks.

Thou hast Tertullian at thy fingers' ends,
Chrysostom and Augustine as by rote ;
Cyprian and Bellarmine are to thee
Familiar as the colours of thy coat.

With Bede thou spendest many studious hours,
With Basil, Gregory, and Vincentius,
Jerome thou read'st without impediment,
Also the great and learned Irenæus.

As Joseph planted corn in time of need,
So dost thou scatter the seeds of faith ;
As Moses led the Hebrews through the sea,
Thou landest thine o'er seas of sin and death.

Armagh's fair church is thy belovèd spouse,
 In holy bonds she's wedded unto thee—
 She is Christ's spouse, to whom o'er hell and fiend,
 Foiling the fiends, He promised victory.

As the great sun, the source of light and heat,
 Outshines moon and stars that gleam awhile,
 So both your fame and eloquence exceed
 All the divines that live in Fire's isle.

Tuathal and Ross, of beauty eminent,
 Your holy brothers are two prelates great,
 Gifted with wisdom, purity, and truth,
 And all the virtues of their high estate.

Eminently skilled is Father Ross,
 In Gaedhlic mysteries, as men declare,
 Happy and hospitable and dignified,
 His triumphs are innumerable and rare.

Mitred and coped he is with great acclaim,
 His fame has gone through all the land abroad,
 So strong is his attachment to the faith,
 And fervent love for the Almighty God.

And Tuathal, who has come from classic Rome
 To dwell with us upon the flat sea shore,
 After long wanderings from the land of Conn,
 Gleaning from foreign soils their richest lore.

Like as in the Fodhla, your ancestors were
 Gentle and gracious, of unbounded power,
 At the same time may victory and fame
 Be with you as the fruit is with the flower.

Eochy Duvelin's strong valorous sons,
 Widespreading trees of fruitage excellent,
 Muredach and Cairroll, also Aedh,
 Before whom the great Ulla's neck was bent.

Muredach and Colla of the counties two,
 From whom the race of the MacMahon rose,
 Men long accustomed to the toils of war,
 To hurl from Erin's soil her foreign foes.

To Alba over the green sea they sailed,
 Estates and welcomes in the East they found,
 Through Oileach, their good mother, much revered,
 Whose name throughout the land was wide renowned.

Homeward returning, at Temora they remained :
 In the invincible army of Ardrigh,
 Remained for many years with vast acclaim,
 The chosen champions of the kingdom's liberty.

And you are now a captain of the Lord,—
 Ye three are fighting valorous and well,
 To make the cause of justice triumph high
 Over the principalities of hell.

Victory comes with you from the East,
 And sits down with you and your friends and kin—
 Empowered as chieftains are, 'tis yours to guard
 Our holy island from the hosts of sin.

When ye three blush, it is the blood of kings
 Reddens your cheeks—kings of the golden shields,
 The royal blood of Brefnè without stain—
 Men who were conquerors on battle-fields.

Of O'Neill of Ulladh, of the golden cups,
 Maguire of drinking horns, and that high star
 O'Donel, green Tyrconnel's hero king—
 The guide, the prop, the thunderbolt of war.

And men beyond these,—the regal blood,
 That from the hundred-battled Conn did flow,
 Is coursing in your veins, O Prelates three,
 Against whom blame or censure none doth know.

Should the foretold Deliverer arrive—
 Should heresy be vanquished—you should ride,
 As your ancestors, in swift chariots, drawn
 By horses thunder-hoofed and lightning-eyed.

From God, His saints and virgins, welcomes each
 Await you freely in the highest heaven—
 Ninety, aye ninety thousand welcomings
 To you, O Prelates of the Lord, be given.

Dr. Ross (or Rock) MacMahon, like the two preceding prelates, studied in the Irish College, Rome. When the See of Armagh was vacant in 1737 by the death of Hugh MacMahon, some friends of Ireland in Rome petitioned to have Dr. Ross MacMahon appointed his successor. He is referred to as a younger brother of

the Bishop of Clogher, and acting as his Vicar-General. "He was then in his thirty-ninth year, and was renowned for zeal and ability. He was laureate in the sacred and profound sciences, of known integrity and religious spirit, of great nobility of soul, never weary of work, and never deterred by any obstacle, however great, when there was the question of duty." The Holy See, however, deemed it expedient to translate Dr. Bernard MacMahon from Clogher to Armagh, and to appoint Dr. Ross MacMahon Bishop of Clogher. A memorial presented to Propaganda about the year 1740 in connection with the Irish College, refers to Ross MacMahon, then Bishop of Clogher, as one of the most talented and distinguished students who had gone forth from the Irish College. "Whilst pursuing his studies at the Gregorian University," it says, "he was considered as gifted with extraordinary talent. The General of the Jesuits, Tamburini, used to say that he had never known a student of so acute a mind. John Baptist Cenni, Prefect of Studies, used to call him *Scotinus*, and this designation was universally given to him by his companions. By express command of the General of the Jesuits, Father Tamburini, he made a Public Defence, morning and evening, in all Theology, a privilege and distinction, seldom, if ever, granted even to the largest colleges in Rome. When proceeding to the Irish Mission—in 1727—he, at the request of his uncle, Archbishop Hugh MacMahon, visited in Paris the Archbishop Cardinal de Bissy, who, being struck by his singular ability, urged him to accept of some high position in that city. In like manner, before he quitted Rome, he was offered a canonry in Liège, in Belgium. But Ross, faithful to his missionary vow, refused to listen to such suggestions, and hastened to devote himself to the Irish Mission." On the death of his brother Bernard he was translated to the See of Armagh. He held the Primacy only for about a year, and died on October 29, 1748. Dr. Renehan records the popular tradition regarding him when he writes that "he lived

long enough to excite a great admiration of his virtues, and to make him be remembered for many years with affection as a truly pious and charitable prelate."

The two last named brothers Primates were interred, not at Errigael, as Dr. Maziere Brady writes, but at Edergole, in the County of Monaghan; and Evelyn Shirley, in his *History of the County of Monaghan* (London, 1878), publishes the inscription on their tomb. He thus writes: "The most curious of the old inscriptions on tombstones at Edergole is the following to two brothers of the MacMahon sept, Bernard and Ross, who were successively Bishops of Clogher and Archbishops of Armagh in the Roman Catholic Church. Above is the rude representation of the complicated coat of debased heraldry which was borne by some of the MacMahons in the reign of James the Second, two swords in saltier between two bears, and two ostriches in chief and base, two stars are also here added; the arms are supported by lions; above is a coronet and mitre." The following is the inscription: "Hic jacent Bernardus et Rochus MacMahon fratres germani uterque successive Episcopus Clogherensis, uterque etiam successive Archiep. Armacanus, totius Hiberniæ Primates. Quorum nobilissimi generis memor pietas atque æmula doctrina vitæque titulis non impar mœrentem patriam decoravere. Bernardus obiit die 27 Mai, 1747, aetat. 67; Rochus die 29 Oct., 1748, aetat. 49. Ambo pares virtute, pares et honoribus ambo. This monument was erected by Mr. Roger McMahon, Bro. to the deceased Primates, Anno Dom. 1750."

I will refer to only one other distinguished prelate, Peter Creagh, who in those days of persecution went forth from the Irish College in Rome, and who as Bishop of Cloyne and Cork, and subsequently as Archbishop of Dublin, had the privilege of being a confessor of the Faith.

Dr. Creagh was Archbishop of Dublin during the first years of the seventeenth century. He had governed the united Sees of Cloyne and Cork with heroic zeal and

devotedness for about seventeen years when, on the 9th of March, 1693, being then in Paris, he was, at the petition of the banished King James II., transferred to the Metropolitan See of Dublin. An exile from his See, and unable to visit his native land, he acted as coadjutor to the Cardinal Archbishop of Strasburg, and in that capital city of Alsace he died in 1705.

One interesting fact commemorated in his life brings before us in bold relief the hardships to which the bishops were subjected in those days. Whilst the persecution raged against the bishops in Charles the Second's reign, he took refuge in the woods and mountains of the County Cork, but even there continued to assemble his clergy from time to time to exhort them to perseverance and to the vigilant discharge of their sacred duties. For some weeks he lived entombed by day in a solitary cave, known only to one servant, whilst at night he ventured forth to visit and console his flock. Here three times his pursuers were on the point of apprehending him. This compelled him to seek a refuge at a distance from his diocese, at his brother's residence, about two miles from the town of Killaloe. Here in the month of March, 1660, he was discovered by a band of assassins, who were hired by the Protestant Bishop of Killaloe to arrest Dr. Molony, the Catholic bishop of that See. For more than two years he had to endure the hardships of imprisonment in Dublin. His enemies, by repeatedly renewing the accusation of treasonable conspiracy against him, hoped to effect his ruin. He was at length, on the 25th of August, 1682, brought to trial in Cork, the city where his alleged treasons were perpetrated. The faithful had but little hope except in prayer, for perjured witnesses were the order of the day, and the fact of being a Catholic bishop was to most of the judges *primâ facie* evidence of any guilt that might be imputed.

The whole city was in the height of excitement. The assize court assembled as usual. The bishop was placed in the dock, the process was read, and the

witness advanced to give evidence; but no sooner had he kissed the Testament than the floor of the court-house gave way. A beam and some iron fixtures supported the seats of the bishop and the judge; all the rest were precipitated a depth of sixteen feet into a cellar beneath. Some were killed on the spot, several were seriously injured, and all were so terrified that they declared they would have nothing more to say to such a trial. The judge cried out to the bishop that Heaven had intervened to set him free. The whole Catholic body exulted, for every one declared that such an interposition of Providence was a manifest miracle. Some of the Protestants were so struck that they embraced the Catholic faith. The accused bishop himself was the only one who appeared to be downcast amid the general rejoicing. He had hoped to be privileged to follow in the footsteps of the Venerable Oliver Plunkett, and like him to receive the martyr's crown. A week later the trial was resumed. One witness alone appeared, but so ridiculous and contradictory were his statements that both judge and jury declared the accusation frivolous and false, and the bishop, being released, was enabled for a few years in comparative peace to resume the exercise of his sacred functions with his characteristic zeal and devotedness.

As regards the literary students who added no small lustre to the fame of the Irish College in the eighteenth century, suffice it to mention Rev. Charles O'Connor, author of *Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores*, and Dr. Lanigan, whose *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland* still holds a place of honour among the best works on the early Irish Saints.

The College of Propaganda in Rome gave two distinguished prelates to the See of Armagh in the eighteenth century. Dr. Michael O'Reilly was appointed to the See of Derry on the 24th of April, 1739. "This diocese," writes Dr. Renehan, "suffered more from persecution than perhaps any other in Ireland. During the whole of the seventeenth century it was bereft of a bishop, owing

to the virulent spirit of the Scotch and English planters and the general extirpation of the Catholic proprietary and population. Hence it was that from the year 1601, when the blood of the holy prelate, Redmond O'Gallagher, was shed for the Faith, until the days of Dr. O'Reilly, Derry had seen no bishop of its own, but was managed by a vicar under the tutelary superintendence of one of the adjacent bishops."

After ten years' assiduous toil in Derry, Dr. O'Reilly was, on January 23, 1749, translated to the Primatial See of Armagh. Here he was beset with new perils. "The blaze of persecution," to use Dr. Renehan's words, "not regularly fed by the blood of the martyrs, had been for some time gradually expiring, and had at length dwindled into a rambling flame, showing itself to-day in one county, to-morrow in another. The clergy, it is true, dared not to avow their character, nor the Catholic slaves show dissatisfaction with their chains; but while they remained concealed no reptiles were systematically employed to dislodge them from their retreats, unless, perhaps, now and again to gratify the caprice or malice or bigotry of some little local persecutor. But, after about twelve years' respite, a general conflagration was again rekindled by an ill-advised Viceroy. On the 28th of February, 1744, the Duke of Devonshire published a Proclamation commanding the magistrates to hunt out all the clergy, and offering an additional reward for the apprehension and conviction of every priest or bishop. £50 was hitherto the highest price paid for catching a bishop, and £20 for a priest; £150 more was now added to the former, and £50 to the latter, and £200 for the conviction of those gentlemen that might afford them lodging, entertainment, or shelter. The reward was to be obtained until October 1, 1745, but his Grace's humanity, shocked at the loss of life and other atrocities caused by his own decree, soon discountenanced its execution, and before the term had elapsed, Chesterfield entered upon his more liberal, or more crafty, administration. During this tempest the

bishops and clergy flocked from every part of the country into Dublin, as to a place where, amidst multitudes of strangers and a vast population, their concealment would be more practicable. Some of Dr. O'Reilly's official letters are still preserved, that were written on this occasion from an alley in the metropolis for the regulation of his clergy (in Derry). When the storm subsided he returned to his diocese under an assumed name, and during his government of Armagh he resided in a farmhouse in the parish of Turfegin (Termonfeckin), near Drogheda." He died in this place of concealment in 1758, and was buried in the Chord outside St. Lawrence's Gate at Drogheda.

Dr. Richard O'Reilly, Administrator and Primate of Armagh from 1782 to 1814, also studied at the College of Propaganda in Rome. He was for a short time coadjutor of Right Rev. Dr. O'Keefe, Bishop of Kildare, but was translated to Armagh in 1782. In those troubled times he was known as "the Angel of Peace." He is described by a contemporary prelate in Stuart's *Armagh* as "agreeable to all by the gentleness of his mind, the affability of his manners, the extent of his information, and the sweetness of his disposition. He was the delight of his flock, the honour and the protection of the priesthood, and the light of pastors." In the writer's edition of Stuart's *Armagh* there is the following MS. note, which throws some additional light on the habits and customs of those days: "Having resided in Drogheda for some years during Primate Richard O'Reilly's time, I have often seen that worthy prelate, a very venerable old man, his hair as white as snow, and flowing thickly to his shoulders, his complexion clear, florid, and of healthy hue, and his features most agreeable, showing he had been a handsome man in his youth. He was of middle stature, well made, stout, active, and vigorous, though then 70 years of age, and generally walked every Sunday morning to say Mass in St. Peter's chapel. He walked from his house on the banks of the Boyne, towards Green Hills, about a mile from Drogheda, into

the town, and through Lawrence Street and West Street to St. Peter's. While walking through the streets he was saluted by crowds of all classes, and as he made it a rule to take off his hat to every one, rich and poor, gentleman or beggar, his head was hardly a moment covered; in fact, he walked bareheaded through the streets, carrying his hat in his hand the whole way, whether it was a winter's or a summer's day. He gave a discourse always after Mass. He was an excellent and persuasive preacher, though making no pretensions to florid eloquence, but his words flowed on fluently, naturally, and gracefully, with great sweetness and touching power, and the doctrines of religion and morality were so simply and beautifully explained and so sincerely inculcated that they made a deep impression on all, from the most learned to the most illiterate of the congregation."

CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

Special aim of the Penal Laws—Their failure—An Italian priest gives an interesting account of the fidelity of the citizens of Galway in 1706—Petition to the Crown in 1724—Catholic solicitors disqualified—A treasonable collection—New Government scheme in 1757—Declaration of Catholic principles—Lowest depth of humiliation in 1760—No Irish Papist supposed to exist in the kingdom—The case of Miss O'Toole—Letter of Mr. Lawrence Saul—The Whiteboys Society—Oppression of the peasantry—Neither religion nor rebellion had any part in the Whiteboy movement—Government measures—Far different course pursued in regard to the "Oakboys" and "Hearts of Steel" in Ulster—Martyrdom of Rev. Nicholas Sheehy, P.P. of Clogheen—Some rays of light on the horizon—Plea of accusation against Rev. Mr. Egan rejected by the Judge—The "Custodiam" Bill—Attempt to close the chapels and oratories in Cork—Arrest of the Archbishop of Armagh and his clergy at Dundalk in 1756—Three letters of the Nuncio from Brussels—The Government alarmed at the over-zeal of Protestant Ascendency—Letter of Dr. Troy in 1780.

THE Penal Laws in Ireland were at first mainly aimed at the clergy and the other leaders of the Catholic body. Death, imprisonment, or banishment awaited the bishop and the priest. Confiscation, ruin, and exile were the lot of the landed proprietors and wealthier class, unless they renounced their Faith. It was hoped that thus the mass of the people, deprived of their leaders, would, through apathy or ignorance, be gradually led to embrace the Protestant tenets. As years went on, however, that delusion vanished. No such result ensued, and hence everything was done by the persecutors that cruelty, or greed, or religious bigotry, or

hatred of race could suggest to crush out the very life-blood of the Irish Catholic peasantry. It was this cruel grinding policy that forced vast numbers of the peasantry, or the poorer classes, into the ranks of the Whiteboys and similar associations, as will be seen in the course of this chapter.

In the meantime, it will not be uninteresting to read the opinion of Irish constancy in the Faith, formed by an observant foreigner, at the very time that this terrible era of the Penal Laws had just begun. In the month of December, 1705, Monseigneur Maigrot, Bishop and Vicar Apostolic of Fokien, after many years of spiritual toil in China, was seized by order of the Imperial Mandarins, and compelled to embark on an English merchant vessel for Europe. He was accompanied in his exile by an Italian Priest, named Mezzafalce. Their ship was detained for some months in the western ports of Ireland, and for the most time in Galway. Father Mezzafalce availed himself of this enforced leisure to address to the Holy Father a letter conveying his impressions of the faithful people whom he thus came in contact with during his stay off the Irish coast. I translate this interesting document from the original in Italian, now preserved in the Propaganda archives in Rome:—

“MOST HOLY FATHER,

“John Donatus Mezzafalce, Missionary from China, humbly begs to state to your Holiness that the English ship in which he is returning from his mission has been for some months lying off the Irish coast, and in particular in the port of Galway. He has not been allowed to set foot on the Island, but he has nevertheless seen, on the one hand, the sufferings and persecutions endured by the Catholics, who are very numerous, and on the other hand, their constancy in matters of religion, and their fidelity and devotion to the Holy See. They make profession of their faith in the presence even of the officials and heretical ministers, and they call themselves Roman Catholics, and, indeed more frequently they use the mere title of Romans, thus the more directly to rebut the insolence of those heretics who, in their impiety, designate themselves as Apostolic Catholics. This profession of their faith is not a matter of mere words, but is most unmistakably proved by their deeds, and particularly by the observance of the precepts of the Church. The

aforesaid Missionary has, on several occasions, seen persons of every rank, rich and poor, come on board the ship and observe abstinence when at meals with the heretics, though they were exposed to derision in consequence of doing so. Even the servants chose rather to do without food than to eat the meat that was allowed them by their masters on the prohibited days. He remarked that they followed this course even on the Rogation-days, in accordance with the ancient tradition of Ireland to keep the Fast on these days. In order to hear Mass, the celebration of Mass not being tolerated within the city, they go forth, men and women, outside the city walls, and they do this to assist, not only at Mass, but also at Vespers, which, in the absence of the clergy, is sung by seculars. Even within the city many families have secret chapels in which Mass is celebrated, especially on Christmas-night, when the city gates being closed, they cannot go forth from the city, and thus they run the risk of forfeiting all their goods and property should they be discovered. Nor are they at all afraid of the most bitter laws enacted in the Dublin Parliament against the Catholics. Hence it is that they have of late years been deprived of every dignity, whether civil or military, nor are they even permitted to carry or keep a sword. In consequence of one of these iniquitous laws, which shuts out from the paternal estates the Catholic in favour of Protestant children, many of them have been reduced to poverty, and live as shepherds in the mountains or on the coasts, *egentes, angustiat, afflicti*, and we may justly add, *quorum dignus non est mundus*.

"If such constancy, Most Holy Father, were found in only a few individuals, amid so many hardships, it would be deserving of great praise, but when, as a rule, it holds good in almost all of every class and of each sex, and of the young as well as of the old, it is difficult to restrain one's tears of compassion, and we are forced to recognise how justly Ireland has received the designation of *Insula Sanctorum*.

"They gave special proof of their religious sentiments on the arrival of our ship, for on hearing that a bishop, Monseigneur Maigrot, was on board, they came in crowds in small boats, men and women, not only from the aforesaid city, but from all the surrounding country, to receive his blessing. The heretics were so enraged at this that they interdicted the bishop and the aforesaid priest, Mezzafalce, from having any communication with them; and the better to terrify them, a military officer, who happened by chance to come on board just when a learned and noble youth, named Gregory French, asked aloud, '*Ubi est Dominus Episcopus?*' gave the youth a slap in the face, and struck him several blows with a stick that he had in his hand, and not satisfied with this he had him bound with cords by the soldiers and wished to have him flogged at the mast-head and dipped in the sea, but a number of other Englishmen ran to prevent this, being horrified at his cruelty, the more particularly on account of the noble birth and excellent qualities of the youth. While this was going on, the heretics locked up the bishop

and the priest Mezzafalce in a dark room at the bottom of the ship, and kept them there for about three hours, until all the Catholics who had assembled took their departure. This, however, did not deter the Catholics from returning to the ship, and when the bishop, Monseigneur Maigrot, advised them not to expose themselves thus to insult, they frankly replied, '*Romani sumus et nihil timemus*'; so much so that the English were at length compelled to yield, or at least to pretend not to see them, fearing lest the people might have resort to violence.

"Those good Catholics, moreover, showed a holy envy in regard to the priest Mezzafalce, when they knew that he was in hopes to present himself soon at the feet of His Holiness, and as the time of the ship's departure was near, the leading men, as well from the clergy as from the laity, came on board to request him, in the name of all, to lay before His Holiness their devoted homage and their unbounded desire to kiss his sacred feet, and this act of devotion, they said, they then performed with their hearts, as it was not otherwise possible for them; and they prayed him to ask, with all humility in their name, the blessing of His Holiness on that city, and all the surrounding country, that being thus strengthened, they might have courage to persevere amid so many persecutions and to remain immovable in the Catholic Faith."

A case that occurred in 1724 will enable us to form some idea of the jealousy with which the Ascendency party set themselves to crush every attempt on the part of the Irish Catholics to alleviate the burden of the grievances by which they were oppressed. In that year some descendants of the old Irish families, who had been reduced to extreme poverty by the confiscations consequent on the Revolution in 1641, resolved to petition the Crown to have their outlawries reversed, and part, at least, of their hereditary estates restored to them, the more particularly as their ancestors had fought for the king, and had lost everything in defence of the royal cause. The House of Commons, from which all Catholics were now excluded, was on the alert. An address to the Crown was adopted without delay, setting forth that "nothing could enable them to defend the king's right and title to his crown so effectually as the enjoyment of those estates which have been the forfeitures of the rebellious Irish, and were then in possession of his Protestant subjects," and further

praying him to discourage "all applications or attempts that should be made in favour of such traitors or their descendants, so dangerous to the Protestant interest of the kingdom." The prayer of the Commons was duly received, and the royal message in reply conveyed to them the assurance that no such applications as those complained of would be received by his Majesty.

This, however, did not suffice for the representatives of the Protestant Ascendency. Some Catholic solicitors had been employed to make the above application to the Crown. They were the only branch in the legal profession in which Irish Catholics were then permitted to practice. A Bill was at once introduced, and soon became law, absolutely disqualifying all Roman Catholics from practising as solicitors. Even this, however, was not deemed sufficient to ensure the Protestant triumph. While the Bill was under debate in the House of Commons, some Catholics in Dublin and Cork set on foot a collection for the purpose of adopting measures in opposition to it. The whole sum collected did not amount to full £5. No sooner was it known that a collection was on foot than information was laid to the effect "that large sums were being collected for the bringing in of the Pretender." All papers connected with the collection were ordered to be seized, and a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to report on the matter. They reported in due course that, under colour of opposing heads of Bills, "great sums of money had been collected, and a fund established by the Popish inhabitants of the kingdom, through the influence of their clergy, highly detrimental to the Protestant influence, and of imminent danger to the present happy establishment"; and as a result an Address was presented by the Commons to the Lord Lieutenant, calling on him "to put the laws against Popery in execution."

Thus it was that every attempt made by the Catholics of Ireland to loose their fetters served only to add to their hardships, and to increase the burden that

oppressed them. Nevertheless, as years went on the enemies of the Church were constrained to recognise that the Faith was not rooted out from the hearts of the Irish people. Hence, a new scheme was devised in 1757, apparently, indeed, extending a modified toleration to the clergy, but insidiously preparing the way the more securely to exterminate the whole Catholic body. It was proposed that a limited number of secular priests would be recognised by the Government, and registered, for the special districts assigned to them. All others were to be relentlessly pursued to death or banished. All friars were to be excluded from this toleration, and all bishops were to be for ever denied a footing in the kingdom. The Irish House of Commons was prompt in adopting this scheme, but it was found that no priests would accept registration on such terms, and the Government in England deemed it inopportune to give approval to the Bill.

Whilst the fate of this Bill was in the balance, a declaration of principles drawn up by Dr. O'Keefe, Bishop of Kildare, and having for its purpose to rebut the calumnies that every day were repeated in the Protestant pulpits and in Parliament, as well as in the press, was very generally signed by the Catholic laity, and in some dioceses was signed by the clergy also. I insert this document in full, as it undoubtedly embodies the sentiments which to a great measure prevailed throughout Ireland at this period.

"DECLARATION."¹

"1. It is not, and never was, a doctrine or tenet of the Roman Catholic Church, that the Pope or General Councils have power to depose kings, or to absolve their subjects from their allegiance. On the contrary, it is by no means lawful for subjects to oppose or use violence against their king or his established government, or to conspire with his enemies directly or indirectly against him or the State under which they live, and by which they are protected; and any subject who should so transgress would become guilty of a mortal

¹ *Memoir of Charles O'Connor*, p. 327.

and most heinous sin before God, any such act of dispensation or absolution notwithstanding.

"2. It is not, and never was, a doctrine or tenet of the Roman Catholic Church, that those of her communion may break faith with, murder, plunder, or defraud those of a different communion or religion. On the contrary, such is an abominable and damnable doctrine, equally repugnant to the law of nature and to the law of God, which obliges us to observe fidelity, honesty, and charity, as strictly towards those of a different religion as towards those of our own.

"3. It is not, and never was, a doctrine or tenet of the Roman Catholic Church, that the Pope has any direct or indirect authority, or power, over the temporal power and jurisdiction of princes. On the contrary, if the Pope should pretend to dispense with the allegiance of his Majesty's subjects, or invade his dominions, we would deem such dispensation null and void, and all Catholic subjects, if commanded or required, bound in conscience to defend their king and country at the hazard of their lives and fortunes.

"4. It is not, and never was, a doctrine or tenet of the Roman Catholic Church, that the Pope or any power on earth can license men to take false oaths, to lie, to forswear, or perjure themselves on any account whatsoever, or to massacre their neighbours, cheat, or injure them or their native country, on pretence of promoting the Catholic religion, or for any other purpose whatsoever. On the contrary, such doctrines and tenets are condemned by our Church as unchristian, abominable, sinful, and wicked; and all pardons or dispensations alleged or pretended to be granted for any such ends or purposes would be null and void, adding sacrilege and blasphemy to the crimes above mentioned."

About the year 1760 the Irish Catholic cause appears to have reached the lowest possible depth of humiliation, and, so far as the Ascendency Government could effect, of degradation also. In the preceding year a Miss Toole sought an asylum in the house of Mr. Lawrence Saul, a respectable Dublin merchant, that she might free herself from the importunity of some Protestant friends who sought to compel her to conform to the Established Church. Mr. Saul was prosecuted for the alleged offence of preventing Papists from embracing Protestantism. It was on the occasion of this trial that the Irish Lord Chancellor pronounced from the bench that memorable sentence: "The laws of the land did not presume that an Irish Papist existed in the kingdom, nor could they

breathe here without the connivance of Government." As a result Mr. Saul was severely mulcted. A letter of his written soon after to Mr. Charles O'Connor, of Belanagare, has been preserved. It reveals better perhaps than any other record the depths of despondency to which the national spirit was sunk at this period. He thus writes :—

"I am an utter stranger to what our people here are doing, and I am resolved never to be concerned in any affairs during my life but those of my family and a small circle of friends. What I suffered on account of my humanity in the case of Miss Toole has taught me this lesson. I was then made to understand from the mouth of no less a person than the Lord Chancellor, that the law did not presume a Papist to exist here, nor could they breathe without the connivance of Government. If so—for I shall not attempt to think otherwise after so solemn a declaration—how can you blame me for being an enemy to Addresses and even to Memoirs? Even you cannot persuade me that they tend to any purpose. I remember to have read in some of the classics, when a schoolboy, a line or two which have been of singular use to me in the course of my life—

"Nunquam poenituit tacuisse ;
At saepe locutum."

"And now, my dear friend, since there is not the least prospect of such a relaxation of the Penal Laws as would induce one Roman Catholic to tarry in this house of bondage, who can purchase a settlement in some other land, where freedom and security of property can be obtained, will you condemn me for saying that, if I cannot be one of the first, I will not be one of the last to take flight from a country where I have not the least expectation of encouragement to enable me to carry on my manufactures to any considerable extent ?

"Heu fuge crudeles terras, fuge littus avarum !"

"The Parliament of 1759 is not the Parliament of 1753. The heart was then on the right side of the political body, ready to promote on all occasions the interest and welfare of the country ; but the case is quite the reverse at present. The patriots of that happy era are the betrayers of this, and he only is wrong who stood out for too great a price, or did not sell himself in time for what he could obtain.

"If, as Pope says, 'whatever is, is right,' those trials may perhaps be intended for our greater benefit, as lessons to show us that we are not to expect any real happiness in this life, and that the greatest calamities and miseries here must have an end.

"This reflection, I own, has often relieved me on many distressing occurrences. But how I will be able to bear at this time of life, when nature is far advanced in its decline, and my constitution by constant exercise of mind very much impaired, the fatal necessity of quitting for ever friends, relations, an ancient patrimony, my 'natale solum'; to retire perhaps to some dreary, inauspicious clime, there to play the schoolboy again, to learn the language, laws, and constitution of the country; to make new friends and acquaintances; in short, to begin the world anew. How this separation I say, from everything dear in this sublunary world would afflict me I cannot say, but with an agitated and a throbbing heart.

"But when Religion dictates and prudence points out the only way, to preserve posterity from temptation and perdition, I feel this consideration predominating over all others. I am resolved as soon as possible to sell out, and to expatriate, and I must content myself with the melancholy satisfaction of treasuring up in my memory the kindnesses and affections of my friends.

"Living or dying, I am, my dear O'Connor,

"Ever yours,

"November 15, 1759.

"LAWRENCE SAUL."

Mr. Saul soon after sold out his property, and retired with his family to France. Many other excellent Catholic families at this time, despairing of any amelioration in their condition at home, sailed for the United States. Several leading men in the Irish Brigade in France, disgusted with the corrupt influence exercised by the French court, quitted the service and made the United States their home. A few years later all these took an active part in the American war for independence.

It was in the year 1761 that the Whiteboys Society was organised in the south of Ireland. The peasantry and labouring class were steeped in misery. Cooper, referring to them in his *Letters on the Irish Nation*, writes: "I assure you that I have felt for the dignity of human nature when I have beheld a race of men who, in form and motion, in stature and countenance, were the pride of the species; on whose persons Heaven has lavished all its favours; who are gifted with courage, with generosity, with all the heroic virtues, and with everything that can give the world assurance of men—to see them, I say, humiliated and degraded to so wretched a condition."

The Whiteboys originated in this way. For some years disease had raged among horned cattle on the Continent, and thence had spread to England. Ireland was free from the contagion. In the result the price of beef and butter rose inordinately, and the landlords, availing themselves of the shining hour, sought to turn all the land into pasture. Cottiers, being tenants at will, were in many cases dispossessed of their scanty holdings, and grazing lands in large allotments were let to wealthy monopolizers. What was felt by the poor tenants to be a crowning grievance was the course now pursued by the landlords, who claimed as their own and enclosed what were known as the commonages, that is, large tracts of waste land, which for years had been used in common by the peasantry, and which were almost their sole resource to enable them to pay their rents and keep their families from starvation.

Towards the close of 1761 some of the peasants of Tipperary banded themselves together to resist this oppression. In one night twelve of the enclosures erected by landlords around those commonages were levelled to the ground. It was mostly at night that the work was done. Those who were banded together, the better to recognize each other, wore white shirts over their clothes, and hence was derived the name of Whiteboys. Their numbers rapidly increased. They marched through the country in formidable bands, demanding the restoration of the commonages, the reduction of rents, and the reinstatement of the cottiers who had been evicted to make room for the graziers. Several outrages were committed. Not only were the fences levelled, but houses were burnt, orchards rooted up, trees cut down, and those who refused to aid in the work were subjected to every possible indignity. The movement rapidly spread into Waterford, and in a few months made itself felt in Cork, Limerick, and Kerry. At a later period the county of Kilkenny became one of its strongholds, and thence its branches extended to the neighbouring counties of Leinster. The landed proprietors were

filled with alarm, and, addressing petition after petition to the heads of Government in Dublin and London, exaggerated in a thousand ways the calamity that had fallen upon them. It was declared to be a Catholic rebellion, having for its object to call in the Pretender, and the better to alarm the Cabinet, it was added that French officers in disguise had landed on the coast, and were seen drilling the disaffected bands by moonlight.

As a matter of fact, however, neither religion nor rebellion against the Government had any part in the Whiteboy movement. The Lord Lieutenant, Lord Halifax, in an official statement to the Secretary of State in London on the 17th of April, 1762, writes: "Not one particular of the matters suggested to your Lordship has hitherto come, with the smallest degree of authenticity, to my knowledge. No French officers in disguise have been taken, no trace of a traitorous or suspicious correspondence has been discovered, none of the stated and measured rendezvous to learn military discipline by moonlight have been yet found out." He adds that the question of religion was nowise involved in the movement: "Protestants as well as Papists have been concerned in these tumults; one or two of the most considerable of those we have hitherto detected are Protestants; these outrages have fallen indiscriminately on persons of both persuasions, and I cannot yet find that any matter of state or religion has been mentioned at their meetings." (English Record Office.) A Commission, appointed to inquire into the causes and circumstances of the riots, also reports that "the authors of these disturbances have consisted indiscriminately of persons of different persuasions, and no marks of disaffection to his Majesty's person or Government have been discovered upon this occasion in any class of people."

The landed proprietors, however, persisted in their clamour that the Government and the Protestant establishment were at stake, and that new Coercion Acts were the only efficacious remedy for the present calami-

tous condition of the country. They thus succeeded in diverting attention from the many grievances under which the peasantry suffered, and, further, a Coercion Act was passed with penalty of death for administering illegal oaths, or parading the country at night in parties of more than five, or injuring property. Grand juries, composed of the landed owners, were empowered to levy fines on the disturbed districts, a Yeomanry Corps was enrolled to hunt down the Whiteboys, and the peasantry, in addition to their former hardships, were now exposed to a lawless and relentless military tyranny. It was only after six years of such lawless rule that the Whiteboy Society was crushed. It reappeared again after some years, and, strange to say, not a few Protestant landlords were found to be among those who sought to keep alive this rioting, that thus they might have a pretext to maintain their old course of extortion and tyranny. Lord Clare, in the Irish House of Commons, though he was the avowed enemy of the Irish Catholics, declared that "the magistrates and landlords are accused, and, I fear, not without reason, as one cause of the Whiteboy disturbances." Dr. Curry, in his *Review of the Irish Civil Wars*, emphatically attests that "it was well known that several Protestant gentlemen and magistrates of considerable influence in the province of Munster did all along, for their own private ends, connive at, if not foment these tumults." The Catholic clergy became particularly obnoxious to the Whiteboys, on account of the warnings given to their flocks against them. In many cases the chapel doors were nailed up to prevent the faithful from assembling to assist at Holy Mass, and secret orders were issued, enforced by a most envenomed terrorism, to prevent the flocks contributing to their pastors' support.

About the same time that the Whiteboy disturbances arose in Munster, two kindred societies, under the names of "Oakboys" and "Hearts of Steel," spread rapidly in Ulster. They were almost exclusively composed of Presbyterians, and they had for their main purpose to

redress the grievances of oppressive tithes and other impositions, which they suffered from the Anglican clergy and from the landlords. They too treated the Catholic priests with great cruelty, having failed to induce them and their faithful flocks to take part in their associations. Far different, however, was the course pursued by Government in regard to the Presbyterian Societies from that adopted towards the Whiteboys. A commission was appointed to redress the grievances of which they complained, and it was the boast of the Oakboys that by a nine weeks' campaign they secured all the exemptions that they demanded.

It was whilst the Whiteboys' disturbances were at their height that Rev. Nicholas Sheehy, P.P. of Clogheen, in the County of Tipperary, was led to the scaffold. It was necessary to find some priest implicated in the Whiteboy proceedings to give some colour to the accusations made by the Ascendancy landlords, and to justify the tyranny which they exercised. Clogheen, in the County of Tipperary, was one of the chief centres of the disturbances. Fr. Sheehy, its P.P., had been several times arrested on suspicion of favouring the movement, but was always acquitted. At length in 1765, the Government, yielding to local pressure, issued a proclamation offering the sum of £300 for his arrest, as guilty of treasonable practices. The priest at once intimated to the Executive his readiness to be tried on the capital charge preferred against him, provided that the trial were held in Dublin. The offer was accepted, and after some delay the trial took place early in 1766, in the Court of King's Bench, Dublin. There was none but manifestly perjured evidence against him, and he was honourably acquitted. His local enemies were not to be thus baffled. An informer named Bridges disappeared soon after Fr. Sheehy's trial. The report was industriously circulated that he was murdered in the county of Tipperary and that Fr. Sheehy was cognizant of the crime. He was tried at Clonmel. The same witnesses whose evidence was rejected in Dublin, again

appeared against him. His witnesses who could disprove those perjured statements were not allowed to appear. He was found guilty, and on the 15th March, the second day after the sentence, he was hanged and quartered at Clonmel. A few weeks later three culprits under sentence of death in Clonmel gaol attested that pardon was offered them if only they would accuse Fr. Sheehy as being guilty of the crime imputed to him. Fr. Sheehy was born in Fethard in 1728, and was educated in France. He made no secret of his sympathy with the people in their impoverished and oppressed condition, but he was wholly innocent of the crime imputed to him. Through special hatred of his priestly character, his head remained spiked over the porch of the Clonmel gaol for twenty years.

Whilst so many storm-clouds were lowering over the Catholic Church in Ireland, there were at times some glimmering rays of light on the horizon which made the suffering people look forward with hope, if not to prosperity at least to toleration and peace. At times those who administered the Penal Laws were not too vigorous in enforcing them. For instance, towards the middle of the century, a Rev. Mr. Egan was prosecuted for being a Popish priest. The priest-hunters were present in court to swear they had seen him celebrate Mass. The judge, however, remarked that that was not a proof of his being a priest, as they had instances of priest-hunters, and notably the Jew Garzia, swearing in court to have gone through the celebration of Mass the better to deceive the people. Besides, the judge added, "a man to be a priest must know some Latin, but this Egan does not even know a word of English": and the case was dismissed.

Sometimes the material interests of the legislators themselves happened to be at stake. In 1755, a measure was introduced into the Irish House of Commons which for a while excited great alarm in the Catholic body. As Catholics could not take mortgages by law, they could not be secured in any debts except

by bond or note, and when considerable sums of money were advanced it had become customary to take for security what was known in law as a custodiam against the borrower's estate. The purport of the Bill now introduced was to declare that such custodiams were to be regarded as evasions of the law against Papists, and were to be regarded as being on the same footing as mortgages. The Bill, however, found but little favour in Parliament. One of its results would have been that the wealthy Catholic merchants would cease to advance money, which hitherto they had done on easy terms, and several of the needy legislators should thus be forced to seek for accommodation at the hands of Jewish money-lenders, who would be far more exacting and severe in their demands.

Some letters of the Internuncio of the Holy See in Brussels, addressed to the Propaganda in Rome in 1756, show the difficulties that beset the clergy and faithful people in those days. On the 11th of May he writes that the magistrates of the city of Cork had ordered all the chapels and oratories of the Catholics to be closed and had seized the keys, and had issued a proclamation prohibiting the Catholics from assembling in them for Divine worship. The Catholic citizens, on learning this, carried away by zeal, rushed into the streets, and arming themselves with the first weapons that came to hand, fiercely attacked some Protestants. These also mustered their forces, and a sanguinary combat ensued. Several were wounded on both sides, though no life appears to have been lost. The whole affair ended in the arrest of a Catholic parish priest, "who is still detained in prison," but in regard to assembling for Divine worship the Catholics appear to have carried the day.

In three letters the Internuncio refers to the arrest of the Archbishop of Armagh, Most Rev. Michael O'Reilly, and eighteen of his priests in the neighbourhood of Dundalk. On the 25th of May, 1756, he writes from Brussels as follows: "A letter from Dublin conveys the intelligence that some Catholic priests had met at a

place called Killicurly. When it became known that eighteen priests were thus assembled, having the Archbishop of Armagh at their head, the house in which they were was surrounded by the military and all were arrested and led off to gaol in Dundalk, it being alleged that though they may not have met for any wicked purpose, yet the sole fact of assembling at such a critical period was in itself a crime." On the 28th of May, he again writes: "The arrest of the Archbishop of Armagh and eighteen priests at Dundalk has been confirmed," and he encloses the following note communicated to him by the representative of England at the Brussels Court: "Dublin, 4th May, 1756. Mr. Reilly, Titular Primate of Ireland, and some priests who were with him, were arrested and brought to the house of Lord Limerick at Dundalk. Being closely and separately examined by him, they were again set at liberty, as it resulted from the examination that the sole purposes for which they had met together was to make arrangements regarding some holidays lately abrogated, and to receive the consecrated oils, which are usually distributed to the clergy after Easter." The Internuncio adds that the same English representative had assured him of the friendly sentiments of the present Viceroy for the Irish Catholics: "This information has given me no little consolation, but nevertheless I fear the Catholics will continue to be persecuted, as enemies of religion are never wanting to avail of every shadow of suspicion to assail them."

He again writes on the 1st of June, 1756: "I am consoled to be able to inform your Eminence and the Sacred Congregation that the Archbishop of Armagh has been set at liberty. The news was not only confirmed on yesterday by Madame d'Ayroll, wife of the English minister, an Irish lady, but to-day I received the authentic confirmation of such favourable intelligence by letter from the archbishop himself, who under date of the 11th of May writes that, either through ignorance or through malice, information was laid against him to the effect that he was collecting funds to set the

Pretender on the throne. The Viceroy, by special dispatch, commissioned Lord Limerick to act on this information, who caused him at once to be arrested and led off to prison, where he was detained for some days, till at length, being found wholly innocent of the imputed crime, he was honourably set at liberty.”¹

In the year 1787, whilst the Defenders’ Society was making itself felt in the North, and the Whiteboy agitation was being revived in the South, it happened that some meetings in the disturbed districts were held at the chapel-yards. A Bill was at once introduced by the Attorney-General and adopted by the Irish Parliament condemning in a special manner all such meetings, and enacting among other penalties that wherever such a meeting was held in a “Popish chapel” or its neighbourhood, the said chapel, in punishment for such an outrage, should be demolished. The precise words of the Bill deserve to be recorded. It proposed “to pull down, level, and prostrate any Popish chapel” where such meetings were held. Nothing could be more unjust than such an enactment, for it was well-known to every one that the rioting and the outrages attendant on the Whiteboy, and Defenders, and similar associations were nowhere so earnestly opposed or so vigorously denounced as in those very chapels by the Catholic clergy. This Irish Parliament Bill was in due course forwarded for sanction to London, but the necessary sanction was not granted, and the Bill was allowed to remain a dead letter. It gave great pain, however, to the Catholic body, and besides manifesting the embittered animus of the Protestant Ascendancy, it had for its effect to stimulate the Whiteboys and Defenders to many deeds of violence.

Sometimes, too, even the official representatives of the Government felt alarmed lest the over-zeal of the Protestant Ascendancy representatives might imperil public order or stir up a violent agitation at an incon-

¹ From the Propaganda Archives, Rome.

venient time. A letter of Right Rev. Dr. Troy, at the time Bishop of Ossory, addressed to the Papal Nuncio in Brussels in 1780, affords an instance, and serves further to bring before us the state of public opinion in Ireland at this period. The letter is dated from Kilkenny, the 30th of March, 1780, and I need only premise that the Mr. Gardiner to whom it refers was the Chief Secretary at Dublin Castle :—

“Your most esteemed letter of the 22nd ultimo reached me in Dublin, and the subsequent letter of the 10th instant came to hand after my return from the capital, where I was detained fifteen days. During that time I had several conversations with Mr. Gardiner and others, relative to the present state of our affairs. He informed me that some Puritans were thinking of organizing an association like that of Lord Gordon in England and Scotland, under the patronage of some members of Parliament whom he named ; and he wished me to speak to three of them, who were, of old, acquaintances and friends of mine, to turn them from such a project by means of political arguments, some of which he suggested to me. I courageously followed his advice, and with some prospect of success, as, after long reasoning, they promised that they would oppose the projected association. Time will tell whether or not they will keep their word. At all events, there has been nothing further about the association in this country, whilst it appears to be spreading and gaining strength in Great Britain. Many persons are of opinion that nothing will be done about our affairs in the present session for want of time. Others consider that it will be almost impossible for us to get the toleration which has been already granted to the English Catholics, as the Government, though friendly to us, is unwilling to irritate the Puritans. Our very friends in Parliament are strangely divided as to the manner of protecting the clergy. Many would wish to lessen and limit, in future, the number, already too small, of the priests and friars. Others threaten the regulars with secularization and exile. Some speak of adopting the Gallican propositions in this kingdom. I have done everything in my power to remove the prejudices of several persons, and I have been assured by many, and in particular by Mr. Gardiner, that I will get information of any Parliamentary measure that may be contemplated regarding the Catholics.”

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

Beginnings of the Irish Catholic Committee—Mr. Brooke employed to defend the Catholic cause—Address presented to the King—Victory of the Catholic Committee in 1793—Its chairman, Mr. John Keogh—Petitions for relaxation of Penal Laws—Insolent conduct of the Protestant Ascendency representatives—Catholic Convention—Petition presented directly to the King—The Catholic subjects of his Majesty commended to the consideration of Parliament—The principles of Protestant Ascendency—An instalment of Emancipation—The “Peep-of-Day Boys” in Ulster—The “Defenders”—Battle of the Diamond—The Catholics subjected to terrible outrages—Words of Lord Gosford—Beginnings of the Orange Society—Character of the Orangemen—Their Charter Toast—The Catholics and the Volunteers—Convention of Dungannon—Independence of Irish Parliament—The franchise denied to Catholics—The Protestant Bishop of Derry—The Society of United Irishmen—Character of Protestant Ascendency representatives—Change of purpose of United Irishmen—The people forced into disloyalty—Rebellion of 1798—Catholic Chapels burned—Letters of the Bishop of Ferns—And of the Archbishop of Dublin—Union with Great Britain—The Catholic Church not conquered.

It was in 1757 that the first beginnings were made of the Irish “Catholic Committee,” which in subsequent years was destined to play an important part in the relaxation of the Penal Laws. Charles O’Conor of Belanagare, Dr. Curry of Dublin, and Mr. Wyse of Waterford, issued an invitation to some of the leading Catholics of Dublin to hold a private meeting at the Globe Coffee House in Essex Street, Dublin, to deliberate on the steps to be taken to organize such a committee. Only seven gentlemen met there on the

appointed day towards the close of 1757. We are told that "trembling for the fatal consequences that were likely to attend their meeting on one side, and galled by those which they experienced from not meeting on the other, they sat down agitated alternately by hope and fear, to agree on some system by which the political concerns of the Irish Catholics could be managed with more order, near the source of Government and information."¹ They proposed that a representative should be elected by the leading Catholics in each parish in the city of Dublin, and in each diocese throughout the island, to meet in Dublin in the beginning of January each year, and at other such times as might be decided upon. Their first care was to employ an able pen to present the oppression of the Catholic body, under the Penal Laws, in its true light before the British public. A *douceur* of fifty guineas was forwarded to Dr. Johnson, but he would not undertake the task. Mr. H. Brooke, who had written some severe things against the Irish Catholics, was next deputed to advocate their cause. Three or four of his letters were published, and were duly paid for; but the committee considered them as superficial and badly devised. Several able anonymous works, however, appeared, written by Charles O'Connor and Dr. Curry, which served to place the condition and history of Ireland in their true light, and it may truly be said that mainly through the exertions of the Catholic Committee the tide of political opinion began very soon to turn in favour of the Irish Catholic cause.

On the accession of George the Second, the leading Catholic nobility and gentry in Ireland had forwarded an address expressive of their loyalty to the throne, and conveying their congratulations to the Sovereign. The address was not even acknowledged, and was treated in official quarters with silent contempt. In the month of December in 1759 the Catholic Committee deemed it

¹ *Memoir of C. O'Connor*, p. 331.

expedient again to present an address to the King. A considerable number of the clergy and gentry voted against such an address being presented. Charles O'Connor and Dr. Curry, however, followed by the Dublin merchants, carried the day, and the address, with 300 signatures, was presented in a most formal way to the Speaker of the House of Commons, to be presented to the Lord Lieutenant, and forwarded to the King. To the surprise of every one it was most graciously received, and in due course an official acknowledgment and a reply were forwarded. The correspondence of the Executive in Dublin with the Government in London reveals the secret motive of this change of manner in dealing with the Catholic address. It was not prompted by any sympathy or affection for the Irish Catholics, but it had for its purpose to encourage and widen the dissensions that had sprung up in connection with it in the Catholic body, and to alienate them, if possible, from the guidance of the clergy.

The Catholic Committee, amid many vicissitudes, continued its work till emancipation was achieved in 1829. Its chief victory before the close of the eighteenth century was won in 1793. Charles O'Connor and Dr. Curry had ere this passed to their reward. Mr. John Keogh, a Dublin merchant, was at this time the chairman of the Committee. Henry Grattan, junior, has sketched his character as "the ablest man of the Catholic body; he had a powerful understanding, and few men of that class were superior in intellect, or even equal to him. His mind was strong, and his head was clear; he possessed judgment and discretion, and had the art to unite and bring men forward on a hazardous enterprise, and at a critical moment." The Catholic body had so long been trampled on with impunity by the Ascendancy party that in the country parts the Catholics were quite despondent, and all Mr. Keogh's efforts to awaken them from their lethargy had proved in vain. The enemies of the Catholic cause now achieved for him what he had himself so long fruitlessly endeavoured to effect.

In 1790 a petition prepared by the Catholic Committee praying Parliament in a most humble way to inquire into the Catholic grievances, was left unnoticed ; no member of Parliament could be induced to present it. In the first Sessions of Parliament in 1792, another petition was drawn up urging a relaxation of the existing Penal Laws, and demanding in particular the elective franchise for Catholics. This petition was presented to Parliament by Mr. O'Hara, member for Sligo. It gave occasion to the most virulent tirades against the Catholics in Parliament. Toler, Latouche, Boyle Roche, and other representatives of the Protestant Ascendency could scarcely find words sufficiently emphatic to condemn what they were pleased to designate the insolence of the Catholic Committee in presuming to present such a petition. As a result the petition was, in the language of those days, kicked out of the House by a majority of 185. The insults offered during this debate to the Catholic body stirred up a spirit of indignation through the country, which the subsequent proceedings of the Ascendency party soon fanned into a flame. Mr. Keogh had in the meantime been reorganising the Catholic Committee. Representatives, two from each county and one from each leading city, were to be elected and associated with the Central Committee in Dublin to form a Catholic Convention, pretty much on the lines of the Volunteers' Convention, which had met in Dublin a few years before.

Nothing could exceed the rage of the Ascendency party. The Earl of Clare, the bitterest enemy of the Catholics, declared such a Catholic Convention to be treason against the Crown. The grand juries throughout Ireland followed suit. The Convention was declared to be "an unconstitutional proceeding of the most alarming, dangerous, and seditious tendency," and all were unanimous in their resolve "to maintain, at the hazard of everything most dear to them, the Protestant interest of Ireland." All this abuse had at length the desired effect of arousing the whole body of Irish Catholics to make common cause with the Con-

vention and with the Catholic Committee. A petition from the Convention was now presented direct to the King, praying for the removal of all disabilities from his Irish Catholic subjects. Such a course was quite unprecedented in seeking redress for Irish grievances, but as Mr. Keogh very forcibly declared : "The Government in Ireland have slighted and insulted us ; this petition must be carried to the throne over the head of the Government." Five delegates were chosen to present the petition to the King. They were John Keogh, Sir Thomas French, Patrick Byrne, James Devereux, and Christopher Bellew. They passed through Belfast on their way to London, and, on the part of the leading Presbyterians, were accorded a most enthusiastic reception. Every effort was made by the Executive in Dublin and by the friends of Protestant Ascendency to prevent a Royal audience being granted to the deputation. But the battle of Valmy had been fought in the preceding month of September. England could not afford just then to irritate the great body of the Irish people. The members of the deputation were received with every display of respect and honour by the Government, and presented to the King, who, as it was officially announced, graciously received their petition.

On the 10th of January, 1793, Parliament met. For the first time in the annals of Ireland, the Lord Lieutenant's speech contained a paragraph recommending the condition of "his Majesty's Catholic subjects to its serious consideration." It was the first time, also, since the Reformation that in official language the name of "Catholics" was given to those Irish subjects. The Address in the House of Commons was moved by Lord Tyrone, and was seconded, in a maiden speech, by the Hon. Arthur Wellesley—the same who, as Duke of Wellington, was destined thirty-six years later, to play a still more important part in advocating the cause of Catholic relief. In obedience to instructions from London, a Bill was introduced extending the franchise, and making other minor concessions to the Irish Catholics.

The apostate Duigenan in the House of Commons, and Lord Clare in the Upper House were the most violent opponents of the Bill. The former called upon Parliament to guarantee once and for ever, intact and inviolate, the principles of Protestant Ascendancy, that is to say, "a Protestant King, a Protestant Parliament, a Protestant Hierarchy, Protestant electors and government, the bench of justice, the army, and the revenue, through all their branches and details, Protestant." The Government, however, urged the proposed measure as a matter of state policy. The Bill was read a third time in the House of Commons on the 7th of March, 1793. The House of Lords was no less docile, and in a few weeks the Royal assent was given to this instalment of Emancipation.

Thus the labours of the Catholic Committee were crowned with triumph. The cannon of Valmy had not thundered in vain. One amendment, however, adopted by the Upper House, revealed the niggardly spirit in which the concession was made. The right of Catholics to carry arms was limited to persons possessing a considerable amount of property, or wealth, thus practically excluding from this privilege almost the whole body of the Irish Catholics.

The "Peep-of-Day Boys" Association was already widespread in Ulster in 1785. It allowed none but members of the Established Church to be enrolled in its ranks, and it avowed its hostility alike to the Presbyterians and the Catholics. Its attacks, however, were wholly directed against the latter, against whom, especially in the county of Armagh, a Holy War was openly declared. Several Catholics had by this time begun to prosper there. They were engaged particularly in weaving, and in the silk and poplin trades. Some of the large proprietors also gave them a preference, admitting them to the small holdings as tenancies became vacant. With this return of prosperity, the outward splendour of Catholic worship revived. Several neat churches were built, and the sacred rites were performed with due decorum. All this stirred up the bile of the vilest dregs

of the Protestant Ascendancy. The special pretext of the Peep-of-Day Boys was to search for arms, for Catholics at this time were not allowed by law to keep arms. Bands of the miscreants, under pretence of enforcing the law, assembled at dawn of day, and attacking some Catholic household, seized on any arms that could be discovered, and then made a bonfire of the furniture, and regaled themselves with whatever provisions could be found. As Catholics were the victims, the Government, for some time, took no steps to redress these disorders. Gradually the scope of the rioters became enlarged, and at length they resolved not to rest content until they had driven every Catholic family out of the county of Armagh. A contemporary historian, himself a minister of the Established Church, relates that "they posted up papers at night on the houses of their adversaries, ordering them to go to hell or Connaught; and threatening severe punishment on their disobedience, which they took care to inflict. Hence, some hundreds of Catholic families—it is said fourteen hundred—were forcibly expelled from their houses, and obliged to take shelter in that province or other parts."¹ A number of the lower order of Catholics organized themselves into a counter Society, under the name of "Defenders," and terrible scenes of rioting between the rival parties were witnessed in Armagh and the adjoining counties. The most serious affray was at a cross roads called the Diamond, in the County Armagh between Richhill and Portadown.² Both factions mustered their strength, but there was this difference, that the Peep-of-Day Boys were well armed and had plenty of ammunition, whilst the Defenders were, to all intents, unarmed. This "Battle of the Diamond," as it was called, was fought on the 21st of September, 1795. The Defenders left forty-eight of their number dead on the field, and

¹ Burdy's *History of Ireland*, p. 467.

² Froude in his *English in Ireland*, iii. p. 154, with his usual inaccuracy in regard to facts, places this affray in the county of Tyrone.

their adversaries, jubilant in their triumph, inaugurated on that day a permanent Association, under the name of the Orange Society. As a result of these outrages, most of the Catholic churches were wrecked, and it was calculated that half of the Catholics of the County Armagh were driven from their homes, whilst most of the remainder were subjected to all sorts of indignities and hardships. Lord Gosford, whom the Government, in this emergency, appointed Governor of the County Armagh, addressing the assembled magistrates on the 28th of December, 1795, said: "It is no secret that a persecution, accompanied with all the circumstances of ferocious cruelty, is now raging in this county. Neither age nor sex, nor even acknowledged innocence as to any guilt in the late disturbances, is sufficient to excite mercy, much less to afford protection. The only crime which the wretched objects of this ruthless persecution are charged with is a crime, indeed, of easy proof, it is simply a profession of the Roman Catholic Faith. A lawless banditti have constituted themselves judges of this new species of delinquency; and the sentence they have denounced is equally concise and terrible. It is nothing less than a confiscation of all property and an immediate banishment. It would be extremely painful, and surely unnecessary, to detail the horrors that attend the execution of so rude and tremendous a proscription—a proscription that certainly exceeds, in the comparative number of those it consigns to ruin and misery, every example that ancient and modern history can supply. . . This is no exaggerated picture of the horrid scenes now acting in this county."

The Peep-of-Day Boys, now merged in the Orange Society, continued to pursue at intervals their career of outrage against the Catholics throughout Ulster. Orangemen at the present day are often heard to boast that from the outset their society gathered into its ranks the very cream of Protestant respectability, and they indignantly repudiate all affiliation with the Peep-of-Day Boys. The contemporaries, however, judged otherwise, as has

been clearly proved by Rev. H. W. Cleary in his excellent work on *The Orange Society*. Rev. Mr. Killen, the Presbyterian historian, writes: "Nothing can be more evident than that the original Orangemen were the very scum of society and a disgrace to Protestantism." Lord Gosford, to whom I have just referred, denounced alike both societies as "lawless banditti and an ungovernable mob." Mr. Grattan in Parliament referred to the outrages perpetrated in Armagh as the deeds of men "who called themselves Orange Boys or Protestant Boys." He said: "Of these outrages I have received the most dreadful accounts; their object was the extermination of all the Catholics of that county; it was a persecution conceived in the bitterness of bigotry; carried on with the most ferocious barbarity by a banditti who, being of the religion of the State, had committed with the greater audacity and confidence the most horrid murders; and had proceeded from robbery and massacre to extermination." He adds: "From all the inquiries I could make, I collect that the Catholic inhabitants of Armagh have been actually put out of the protection of the law; that the magistrates have been supine or partial; and that the horrid banditti have met with complete success; and from the magistrates with very little discouragement." I will only add the authoritative statement of Lecky, who, in his History of this period, expressly attests that "the Peep-of-Day Boys ultimately merged into Orangemen," whilst he no less emphatically writes that "at first Orangeism was simply a form of outrage." Thus it was that under a new name the very dregs of Protestantism pursued for some years with impunity their career of crime, and left nothing undone to give effect to their vow not to rest till they had exterminated the Catholics of Ireland.¹

¹ The Charter Toast of the Orange Grand Jurors of Ulster at their convivial meetings was as follows:—"To the glorious, pious, and immortal memory of the great and good King William the Third (not forgetting Oliver Cromwell), who saved us all from Popes and popery, knaves and knavery, slaves and slavery, brass

It will be asked, how did the Irish Catholics fare with the Volunteers, who about this time had no little part in asserting the independence of the Irish Parliament?

The formation of the Volunteer corps in 1780 may be said to have quickened the Irish nation with new vigour and new life. The French fleets, whilst conveying troops to their allies beyond the Atlantic, more than once had threatened a landing on the Irish coasts. England's troops were engaged elsewhere, and could not now be spared for the protection of the sister isle. It was thus that the great Volunteer movement arose. Every Irishman entitled to bear arms was invited to enrol himself as a volunteer in some regiment of foot or cavalry to defend his country against a hostile landing. One hundred thousand men were soon under arms, and the political leaders were not slow to avail of the opportunity thus presented to them to remedy some of the grievances of which they had long complained, and to assert the independence of the Irish Parliament. A convention of Ulster delegates held at Dungannon in the County Tyrone, on February 15, 1782, formulated the declaration that no body of men save the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland had any power to make laws to bind the Kingdom of Ireland. The same declaration was without delay adopted at meetings of the Volunteer delegates and municipal corporations all over the island. It was at length embodied in a resolution submitted by Grattan in the Dublin House of Commons,

money and wooden shoes. And all that refuse to drink this toast, may they be rammed, stammed, crammed, and damned into the great gun of Athlone, to be blown over the hills of damnation. May their teeth be converted into paving-stones to pave the way of the Croppies into hell, and their blood into train oil to light their souls to damnation. May I be at the end of the gun with a fiery flambeau to send them burring round the earth, the moon, the stars, and the sea; may they be blown against the rock of blastation, and come down in a shower of innumerable pieces, and may those pieces be picked up and made into sparables to mend the soles of Orangemen's boots to walk on the 12th of July." This was printed and given to every Orangeman, and it was all implied, though the toast were briefly given "Our Charter Toast."

and unanimously adopted on the 15th of April, 1782, to the effect "That the Kingdom of Ireland is a distinct Kingdom, with a Parliament of her own, the sole Legislature thereof; that there is no body of men competent to make laws to bind the nation, but the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, nor any Parliament which has any authority or power of any sort whatever in this country, save only the Parliament of Ireland; that we humbly conceive that in this right the very essence of our liberty consists, a right which we, on the part of *all* the people of Ireland, do claim as their birthright, and which we cannot yield but with our lives." A Bill framed on this resolution received the sanction of the Crown in England, and full freedom was for a time restored to the Irish Legislature.

So far, however, as the Irish Catholics were concerned, the Volunteer movement served only to bring into bolder relief the helpless state of servitude to which they were reduced. They were not admitted to the ranks of the Volunteers, for in consequence of the Penal Laws they were not entitled to bear arms. In so far, however, as they were tolerated, they joined in the movement with enthusiasm. Everywhere throughout the country they brought whatever arms they could procure to equip the Volunteer regiments, and they shared in the manifestations of joy that greeted the national independence. They fondly imagined that they formed part at least of "all the people of Ireland" whose liberties were asserted. Some of the Volunteers and a few Protestant patriots were of the same opinion, but the vast majority thought otherwise. A grand national convention of Volunteer delegates was summoned to meet in Dublin in November, 1783, and there the question of the admission of Catholics to the franchise was proposed. Foremost among the opponents of the measure were Lord Charlemont and Mr. Flood, the then leaders of the movement for national independence, and by a vast majority this relaxation of the Penal Laws was rejected.

It was in some respects a singular spectacle that at the Volunteer conventions the Protestant Bishop of Derry vigorously asserted the Catholic claims. It was generally supposed that, worthless as he was in many other respects, he was, at least in this course of action, impelled by the desire to see justice done to the great majority of the unoffending people among whom it was his duty to minister. The Catholic bishops, however, placed no confidence in him, and his letters lately published more than justify the attitude which they assumed in his regard. We glean from this private correspondence that he had an intense hatred of the Catholics of Ireland, and that he hoped by friendly dealings with them to weaken their affections for Rome, and to bring them at least to adopt the Gallican principles, if not to abandon the faith of their fathers. He spent many years in Italy, and he relates with the utmost cynicism in one of his letters, that he expended considerable sums of money as bribes among the underlings connected with the official congregations in Rome. He had formed the preconceived opinion, he tells us, that the Irish Catholics were deeply engaged in treasonable correspondence with the enemies of England on the Continent. The agents whom he bribed in Rome readily entered into his views, and corroborated in a marvellous manner his preconceived opinions. He could never induce any one, however, either at home or abroad, except himself, to give credence to the cunningly devised stories for which he so liberally paid.

The Volunteers may be said to have prepared the way for the "Society of United Irishmen." This Society as at first organized in 1790, was quite constitutional in its purpose. Its aim was to unite all Irishmen of every class and every denomination to redress the many grievances under which the country was oppressed. The administration of Government, which was altogether in the hands of the Protestant Ascendancy party, was hopelessly corrupt. They could only be checked by the cordial union of all those who were cruelly oppressed.

To sketch the character of the Protestant Ascendency representatives of those days, I need only refer to the pages of their own champion, James Anthony Froude. In his *English in Ireland*, he tells us that towards the middle of the eighteenth century and in the subsequent years, "a moiety of the landowners were lounging in England or abroad. Of those who remained, a select few of the highest in the land had formed themselves into a Society of Blasters, men whose religious service was a liturgy of execrations, and whose aim in life was to invent untried forms of impiety and profligacy. The choice spirits set the tone. Those less gifted, either in fortune or genius, imitated, at a distance, the more splendid vices of their leaders. The better sort, weary of the hopeless struggle, dropped off one by one, as the century waned, from the narrow road to the broad." As years went on they remained unchanged. The same panegyrist of English rule in Ireland, treating of the closing period of the century, adds: "The aristocracy and legislature were corrupt beyond reach of shame. The gentry had neglected their duties till they had forgotten that they had duties to perform. The peasantry were hopelessly miserable."

The Presbyterians in the North of Ireland smarted under many grievances. Protestant patriots in the other provinces were eager to reform some, at least, of the glaring abuses that prevailed. The reformers, however, felt that in point of numbers they were quite unequal to the struggle unless the Catholics were united with them. These, therefore, were invited for the first time to rally around the national standard, and to make common cause in asserting the rights of Ireland. The following sentence from the original manifesto of the *United Irishmen* shows the spirit of their organization in those days: "In the midst of an island where manhood has met, and meets with such severe humiliation, where selfish men and classes have formed a malignant conspiracy against public good, let our beneficent conspiracy arise, one plot of patriots pledged by solemn adjunction to each other

in the service of the people, the people in the largest sense of that momentous word."

Three resolutions embodied the whole purpose and aim of the organization :—

"1st. That the weight of English influence was so great as to require a cordial union of all the people of Ireland to maintain liberty. 2nd. That the only constitutional method of opposing that influence was by reform of Parliament. 3rd. That no reform was practicable which did not include Irishmen of every religious persuasion."

The triumphs of the French Revolution, which found many eager sympathisers among the Presbyterians of Ulster, soon changed the scope and purpose of the United Irishmen. An inner circle was gradually formed amongst them, and Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, just then published, became the charter of their aspirations. They would aim at establishing a universal republic, hence Catholic claims were flung aside, and something akin to the Cromwellian Commonwealth was in preference to be the object of their ambition for Ireland. Informers abounded in those days. The English Government was fully cognizant of the revolutionary spirit which was abroad in Ulster. A few of the leaders were arrested and suffered the extreme penalty of the law. Others were allowed to seek a home beyond the seas. Arms were seized in the suspected districts throughout the province, and the whole movement was quickly suppressed. It will be remarked that in this later development of the Society of United Irishmen, the Presbyterians allowed themselves to be led away by their inveterate hatred of their Catholic fellow-countrymen. The same spirit was again shown a few years later. When the British Government proposed to carry into effect the Legislative Union of Ireland with Great Britain, the Presbyterians of Ulster were for a time amongst the foremost supporters of the scheme, but when it was announced that the proposed Union was to be followed by a complete emancipation of Catholics

from the Penal Laws, their ardour was relaxed, and very soon they were to be found in the ranks of the most ardent opponents of the proposal.

The Government had for some years resolved on putting an end to the Irish Parliament by carrying into effect the legislative union of the two kingdoms. Lord Fitzwilliam during his short term of Viceroyalty had reproached the Government in London with the design of forcing the people into disloyalty. "You calculate on confusion arising, from which the Union will be welcomed as an escape," he thus wrote to the Chief Secretary in London in February, 1795. Vast numbers of Catholics had been enrolled in the Society of the United Irishmen throughout Leinster and Munster. The Government deliberately resolved to goad them into rebellion. The military and yeomanry were let loose amongst the peasantry on a career of plundering and picketing, especially in the counties of Kildare, Carlow, Wicklow, and Wexford. Under pretence of searching for rebels, they roamed through the country at night, plundering every house that had an appearance of respectability or comfort and then setting fire to it. In my younger days I often heard with horror the narratives of those who had witnessed the harrowing scenes that at length forced the people to grasp the pike as the only hope to save them from the terrible cruelty to which they were every day subjected. What is known as the Rebellion of 1798 may be said to have lasted only a month, from the 23rd of May to the 22nd of June. During that period there were 135,000 British military¹ in the field. The Catholic peasantry, without leaders, without commissariat, without discipline, and for the most part armed only with the pike, gave proof of singular heroism. In several engagements their ardour swept the regular troops before them; but when fresh armies were ever at hand to be marshalled

¹ This may seem at first sight to be an exaggeration, but even when the Rebellion had been suppressed Ireland still continued to be "occupied by more than 100,000 armed men" (O'Connor Morris, *Ireland from 1798 to 1898*, p. 46).

against them, what could such ardour avail? It has been calculated that 70,000 lives were lost during those days of rebellion, and of these no fewer than 20,000 perished in the military ranks. The sad effects of the disturbances extended far into the present century, and in many districts the martial law that was proclaimed, and the free-quarters of the yeomanry and military, continued to entail untold misery and oppression on the people.

Several Catholic churches, or chapels as they were then generally called, were wrecked and burnt by the military and mobs of armed Orangemen. Right Rev. Dr. Caulfield, Bishop of Ferns, who resided among his flock throughout all this dismal period, attests that "in the extent of nearly fifty miles from Bray to Wexford, almost every Roman Catholic chapel was laid in ashes." From several official lists drawn up by Most Rev. Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin, and other authentic sources, I gather that no fewer than seventy-five Catholic churches were thus destroyed. The total compensation granted by Government for this wrecking of churches amounted only to £5,500. A letter from the Bishop of Ferns, to whom I have just referred, dated from "near Wexford, September the 14th, 1800," shows that the rage for desecrating Catholic places of worship continued long after the rebellion had been suppressed:—

"I take the liberty of enclosing the names of the sureties given me for the due expenditure of the moneys to be issued for rebuilding and repaying the chapels destroyed, &c., in the district. I perceive I have been very tedious, but I could not be more expeditious; I waited, but as yet in vain, to get returns from the six districts noted at the foot of the enclosed, whose pastors and curates have been hunted and violently driven from their parishes and homes, though in my conscience I always did, and still must consider and believe them to be honest men, and from Christian principles sincerely attached to his Majesty and Government, and abhorrent from all rebellion, sedition, tumult, and riot. There are three chapels in the district of Ferns, one in the town, one at Clologue, and a small one at Ballyduff; Clologue, though valued by the architects, is not in the list (I suppose by mistake), the other two are; and if only two are granted, it is to be wished that Clologue be granted instead

of Ballyduff, the former being convenient to the bulk of the parish. The sureties may be the same, they are approved and recommended by Captain Cornock, a magistrate and commander of a corps of yeomanry in Ferns. Some days ago I mentioned to you the burning of the Chapel of Caimé in the Duffry, a small but pretty one, and that I ordered the priest to get it valued by proper judges, with a hope that Government in their usual bounty may rank it with the rest. Though the poor people should suffer by the inclemency of the winter and want of covering, yet I must submit to your consideration the inexpediency of commencing the building of those chapels at this advanced season of the year, especially as this prejudiced spirit of burning and breaking, and mischief, though in some degree abated, has not subsided. I beg your prudent advice on the point, and remain with great respect," &c.

A month earlier, Dr. Troy himself thus wrote to Lord Viscount Castlereagh :—

“ANNFIELD, near LUTTRELSTOWN,

“August 5, 1800.

“MY LORD,—Since I had the honour of writing to your Lordship yesterday, I received letters from the County Wexford, mentioning that a new slated chapel in Bantry, on Mr. Carew's estate, to the building of which he had liberally contributed, was burned about three weeks ago. An attempt had been made to burn another chapel in the Duffry, but the neighbouring people extinguished the flames and prevented much damage. In many parts of that ill-fated county no priest dare officiate. In others they cannot even appear. In all they are daily threatened.”

The suicidal act by which the Irish Parliament frittered away its liberties and voted the union with Great Britain, on the 13th of June, 1800, was, so far as Ireland was concerned, a befitting close to the eighteenth century, a century of persecution and of Penal Laws. Degradation and corruption, combined with demoniac hatred of the Catholic people, had become the distinctive and recognised features of the Irish Parliament, and made it a by-word throughout Christendom. No wonder that there would be many genuine patriots who loved Ireland with purest love, but who, nevertheless, despaired of the redress of their country's wrongs, so long as such a Parliament controlled her destinies. Few, nowadays, will be found to question that the Act of Union was an evil

deed perpetrated by the most venal and corrupt of men. The Irish Parliament, writes Mr. Spencer Walpole, was never in any sense representative of the nation : " it was the corrupt embodiment of a dominant race ; it sold the birthright of the nation for its own selfish ends." But Providence can draw good even from the greatest of evils, and in the present instance the merging of the Irish representatives in the British Parliament has, without doubt, contributed in no small degree to many happy results. If Catholic Emancipation has been achieved and the Irish Established Church set aside, if Parliament has been reformed and many useful Acts have been adopted for Ireland in the matter of education, if the colonial policy of the Empire has been placed on a secure and sound footing, and if the whole administration of the country has been permeated by a liberal spirit, all this has been effectually carried out through the active co-operation of Irish members.

When the Irish Parliament shall be restored, it will be found to be of a stamp far different from the corrupt assembly that closed its sittings in the year 1800. It will be found to be animated by genuine patriotism and to represent the whole body of the Irish people, and we are confident that, by the wisdom of its legislation, and its devotedness to the country's welfare, it will merit to hold a foremost place among the most enlightened and most beneficent Parliaments of Christendom.

The words with which Mr. Grattan ended his speech against the Union may not be out of place in bringing these chapters to a close : " I do not give up the country. I see her in a swoon ; but she is not dead. Though in her tomb she lies helpless and motionless, still there is on her lips a spirit of life, and on her cheek a glow of beauty. Thou art not conquered ; beauty's ensign yet is crimson on thy lips and in thy cheeks, and death's pale flag shall not advance there."

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